The Harappan Origin of Hinduism

The Harappan Origin
of
Hinduism

R.C. Dhanda

2001
BOOKLINKS CORPORATION
HYDERABAD - 500 029 (INDIA)

First Published : 2001

I S B N : 81-85194-64-5

Rs.400.00 $ 35.00 £ 25.00

Published by
K. Rama Krishna
Booklinks Corporation
3-4-423/5&6 Narayanaguda
Hyderabad - 500 029 (India)

Laser Typesetting by
Lipi Graphics
171/B, S.R. Nagar,
Hyderabad - 500 038 (India)

Printed at
D.K. Fine Art Press (P) Ltd.,
Delhi - 110 052

PRINTED IN INDIA

To My Wife

Rani

And Children

Rohini, Rahul & Rohit

And Above all

To The Memory of My Nephew

"Jacky" Dhanda

Who Helped Me Put this Book Together

Contents

Preface

I learnt about the Harappa Civilisation well past my high school graduation.. The history curriculum in my school days made no mention of this lost civilisation. I remember well that Sita Ram Kohli's " Twareekh - e - Hind" which was prescribed for our high school history course merely mentioned that the pre-Aryan denizens of India were primitive aboriginals who lived in jungles and worshipped snakes, trees and animals. The Indian history was supposed to begin with the arrival of the Aryans who were said to have brought the arts of civilisation to India.

Our school was run by Arya Samaj, a Hindu socio-religious institution, and as such Vedic studies , or as we called it *Ved Patth*, was mandatory. Our teacher was well versed in Vedic lore and was a compelling speaker. The aforementioned view of Indian history was further elaborated and strengthened by his eloquence.

I believe it was in the winter of 1943 that I , for the first time, learnt about Harappa Civilisation from my older brother who had just returned from a visit to Harappan site. He was quite excited about what he had seen and learnt about this civilisation. Being a very good story teller he passed on some of his excitement to me and I was quite eager to learn more about this subject. As it happened shortly afterwards my older sister embarked on her studies for a master's degree in history and thus all sorts of history books became available to me. Ever since I have remained an avid student of this bronze age Indian civilisation. And during all these years I have tried to keep pace with the latest developments in Harappan archaeology and its interpretation.

Right from the beginning when I started taking interest in this subject, a feeling has been growing on me, ever so slowly and gradually, that what I had been taught about the beginning of Indian history in my school days, or what I had learnt about it from some traditional historians, was not quite true. I realised that Hinduism that was practised at my home, the homes of the neighbours, the community, the towns and cities and the country at large did not spring from Aryan sources but was well and truly rooted in pre-Aryan traditions of the long vanished Harappa Civilisation.

This book grew out of an interest in exploring the role of that civilisation in the evolution of Hinduism. This book is mostly based on what I have studied and I am thankful to a great many scholars whose researches and insights have helped me in my endeavours. However, the conclusion reached are my own and if there be any fault the responsibility is mine and mine alone.

In the end I would like to say something about the use of the terms 'Aryan' and 'Hindu' in this essay. The word "Aryan" can no longer be used as denoting a race of people. It can only be used for a language. Therefore where ever possible the word "Indo-European" has been used for non-Indian people who inhabit areas other than India. However, I have retained the use of "Aryan" for that branch of the Indo-Europeans who came to India to distinguish them from the rest . After all the members of this branch did call themselves Aryan.

The word Hindu is of Iranian coinage circa 6th century B.C.E As far as I am aware the people of India at that time, or during subsequent centuries, never used this term to designate themselves or their religion. This word was given currency by the Muslim rulers to distinguish their co-religionists from the mass of the Indian peoples. It appears that it was in the 19th century that it came to be accepted for both the religion and people of India who were neither Muslim nor Christian. Therefore, its use prior to that time, particularly of those times I am writing about, would be an anachronism. However for the lack of a suitable term I have retained its use.

– R.C.Dhanda

Sterling,
Virginia, U.S.A

The Aryans Do We Know Who They were? 1

1. The Ancient Hindu View of History

History is one subject in which our ancestors had no interest, no intellectual curiosity about its material remains, nor any scholarly inclination or competence to understand its significance. It is therefore not a matter of surprise that despite being steeped in hoary traditions, India failed to produce a Herodotus, a Suetonius or a Tacitus to record the history of its people and religions.

It is true that apart from brief interludes India was never an unified state. And as such it is much too much to expect that there should be an history of the entire sub-continent. Instead there ought to be histories of many regions that together form this country. It is therefore most disappointing that with the exception of Kalhana's *Rajatarangni*, which describes the history of Kashmir, even these regional histories are conspicuous by their absence.

The ancient religious thinkers and writers had hardly any historical sense and were not concerned in compiling a systematic account of political events or of the phases of social and economic progress. The extensive literature of ancient India prepared by these religious thinkers is therefore quite indifferent to history and without any historiographic consciousness. It provides hardly any information about the successive invasions of India by the Iranians, Greeks, Parthians, Scythians and the Huns even though the last two invaders had a profound influence on the religious and social life of the Indians. That shows that events in the dimension of times past were never scanned and, axiomatically not recorded.

There was no curiosity about the dovetailing of one age into an earlier one. One cannot find any expression of a genuine feel for contemporary history let alone prehistoric inquiries.

The ancient denizens of this land lived in a religio-metaphysical world that favoured an acute awareness of the timeless as the ultimate reality that eliminated concern for the unending flow of time that, in the words of Amaury de Reincourt, "binds all elements together into a unity as a river receives affluents and tributaries streams and merges them into a powerful sweep from the past mountains to the future ocean."[1]

Deprived of this linear view of the flow of time the ancient Indians developed a world view where time moved in eternal cycles and had little concern for linear ordering of events which is the essence of history. To them there was no beginning, no end, just seamless eternity. Since the mind of the ancient thinkers was fixed on eternity the texture of history was for them a mere illusion not worthy of any interest.

In fact one who reflected on, and made records of past events, was thought to be enmeshed in this world of senses and was, in the process, delaying his own release from this world of tears and sorrows that come with the mortal coil.

It is not surprising, then , that there was a time, not so long ago, when the history of ancient India was known only from the voluminous texts known as the *Puranas*. There were scores of them, but the major *Puranas* are only 18 in number and were composed in antiquity but were thoroughly revised, rewritten, edited and re-edited between 3rd to 6th centuries of the Common Era. But material of religious and didactic nature continued to be added to them till the 12th century. These texts are, according to the famous Sanskrit lexicon *Amarakosh* (6th century C.E), supposed to deal with , among other things, historical traditions, particularly the accounts of royal dynasties that are said to have ruled in various parts of India.

These texts contain a miscellany of king lists and their genealogical tables but their main contents are religious laws and moral anecdotes. The dynasties of such royal families as are available in the extant *Puranas*, are sadly incomplete. Even so, the recording of dynastic history ceased with the early Guptas after whom no important dynasty has been described or mentioned in these texts.. None of the extant Puranas mentions the reign of Harsha.

Even these written records had, as stated above, of necessity been edited and re-edited many times and in the process the legends and even the supposedly historical facts were slanted to reflect the changing viewpoint of the scribes over the centuries. These priestly scribes had no interest in history; they were only concerned with pleading their own cause. As such they remained quite indifferent to the contradictions and incompatibilities in the finished works. Therefore, as historical document these texts are nothing more than myths and legends having no connection with reality and with hardly any documentation worth the name..

The material is so nebulous and ahistorical and wanting in chronology that virtually no date can be assigned to any historical event mentioned there. In short, from the available material, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between fact and fancy.

James Prinsep, who deciphered *Brahmi* script and read Asoka's edicts, had this to say of this genre of literature, "as long as the study of Indian antiquities confines itself to the illustrations of Indian history, it possesses little attraction for the general student, who is apt to regard the labour expended on the disentanglement of the perplexing and contradictory mazes of fiction, as leading only to the substitution of vague and dry probabilities for poetical albeit extravagant fables."[2]

A modern scholar, Romila Thapar, echoes the same view when she says "had this literary source been the only available source, the basis of discussion of the ancient Indian history would have been very limited indeed" [3]

In the post Gupta period some works were produced such as *Harsha-Charita* of Banbhat (life of emperor Harasha), *Gaudavaho* and *Vikramanka- deva* by Vakapati and Bhilana respectively which describe the exploits of Yasovarman and king Vikarmaditya of the later Chalukyas but these and other works such as Chand Bardai's *Prithviraj-raso*, cannot be regarded as true history because these texts are nothing but paeans of praise in the honour of the author's royal patron and do not shed any light on the political, social, economic and historical events of their times.

The knowledge of ancient Indian history is due entirely to foreign sources such as Greek. Roman, Chinese and Arab. Early attempts

at gleaning facts from these sources to weave a credible history of ancient India was entirely the work of foreign scholars. For example. Asoka, perhaps the greatest monarch in the entire history of India, had been completely forgotten by the Indian people. His inscriptions scattered all over the country on pillars and rocks made no sense to them as they could not read the script in which they were written.

Asoka owed his return to Indian consciousness to the diligence and scholarship of a foreigner - James Prinsep a clerk in the service of the British East India Company. Even after he deciphered the Brahmi script and read the Asokan inscriptions, no Indian text or scholar could inform him that the title "Piyadassi" mentioned in those inscriptions referred to Asoka. He thought that Piyadassi was perhaps a ruler of Shri Lanka who had conquered India. It was only the study of early accounts of the history of that country, composed by the Buddhist monks, that revealed that Piyadassi of the Indian inscriptions was indeed the great Mauryan monarch. This lack of historical sense is particularly glaring when we talk of the Indo-Aryans who are supposed to be the source of Hindu religion and civilisation.

We Hindus are so proud of our Aryan ancestors that beliefs regarding them have become virtually a religious dogma with us. Such beliefs were developed on the basis of a devout but a far from critical study of the Vedas, the Epics and the *Puranas*. But these texts give us no information about the identity of Aryans. Who were they and whence did they come? are questions these texts are unable to answer. It was again a foreign source - philology - the science of comparative linguistics, developed by European scholarship in the past couple of centuries, which provided material to tackle these questions. It is surprising that the great Panini who, it is said, was a Yusufzai Pathan and a subject of the Iranian empire [4] did not notice the close affinity between Sanskrit and Persian: the two languages being much closer in his times than they are now.

For that matter even the Greeks, who ruled over Iran and large parts of northern India at one time or the other, also failed to recognise the affinity that existed between their language and that of the Iranians and the Indians.

One of the first scholars who recognised the close affinity that existed between languages of Europe, Iran and India was an 18th century Englishman, James Parson, physician by profession and a fellow of both the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquarians. He started with the study of the close relationship that existed between Irish and Welsh and then extended his study to other European languages and than to the languages of the orient including Iran and India. However, until quite recently European scholars of all descriptions remained fettered to the cosmogony of the Bible.

Parson was no exception. Constrained by the prevailing literal adherence to the Book of Genesis, he declared that all these languages were derived from the language of *Japhet*, son of *Noah*, and his descendants. Long after Parsons many Europeans scholars continued to call these languages as *Japhetic*

At the same time European scholars and administrators, mostly British, working in India were discovering to their surprise that Sanskrit bore uncanny resemblance in structure, phonology and lexicon to Greek and Latin.

In 1796, Sir William Jones, Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court, and founder-President of the Royal Asiatic Society, in a discourse on Indian culture declared that "the Sanskrit language, whatever may be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the form of grammar that could not have been produced by accident; so strong that no philosopher could examine all the three without believing them to have sprung from some common source."

The discovery of Indo-European family of languages and philology is therefore traditionally assigned to him. It was largely owing to the rediscovery of Sanskrit that ancient Indo-European languages were reconstructed and that the modern science of linguistics was initiated. Fredrich Von Schlegal's "On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians", published in 1808 and Franz Bopp's great book, "On the Conjugation System of Sanskrit", published in 1816, heralded the study of comparative linguistics and grammar. Bopp and his followers such as August Friedrich Pott, Jakob Grimm,

August Schleicher, Karl Brugmann and Herman Paul built up an imposing edifice of Germanic languages on their Indo-European foundations. Together they were able to demonstrate the broad relations existing between the languages of Europe, Iran and India.

These scholars also laid the foundations for reconstructing the parent Indo-European language of five thousand years ago: forms of its words, shapes of its elaborate inflections and the structure of the main type of its sentences. They also established laws by which sounds changed in one way and not the other. By the mid 19th century Indo-European studies were firmly established and major compendia of comparative philology were published.

2. The Aryans And The Europeans Racial theories

Long before the advent of the Indo-European linguistic studies, the Europeans had firmly believed in the cosmologies and genealogies of the Old Testament according to which mankind had descended from a common ancestor, *Adam*, through the Patriarch *Noah* and his three sons namely *Japeth, Shem and Ham* (Genesis X). According to some obscure etymological hints contained in the Bible Georgius Horn, a professor at the Leydon university (1666 C.E), assigned the paternity of the Europeans to the progeny of *Japheth* and that of the Asians and the Africans to that of *Shem* and *Ham* respectively.

With the great discoveries of Galileo, Copernicus, Tycho Brahe and others in physical sciences, and the discovery of the Americas where an hitherto unknown race of humankind was found that did not fit in with the Biblical account of creation, doubts were cast about the veracity of the Biblical doctrine of cosmology and genealogy well before the 16th century and it was finally rejected in the century of Enlightenment. As the Biblical inheritance was no longer received so reverentially, accent was placed on alternative genealogies based on blood and race.

Scientific discoveries, explorations and the colonisation of the Americas and many other parts of the world by European powers naturally created in the minds of European thinkers the idea of the supremacy of their white race over rest of the mankind. They sought to justify this claim of racial superiority on the so called findings of anthropology which had begun to emerge as a separate

scientific discipline early in the 18th century. This new science, however, was still a mixture of myths, superstitions and travellers tales. Pseudo- scientific generalisation were sufficient to transform fantasies into anthropological theories.

The 18th century anthropologists accepted it as a fact that diverse species could be cross-bred. For example Locke(1632-1704) in England declared that he had seen with his own eyes a creature which was the issue of a cat and a dog and displayed the characteristics of both[5]. A Frenchman, Reaumur (1683-1757), claimed to have successfully cross-bred a chicken with a rabbit. Johann Fabricius, a pupil of Linneus, "proved" how Negroes were descended from a cross between men and apes[6].

An English doctor John Atkins (1685- 1757) believed that white and black races were born of different coloured first parents. He also believed that Negroes could breed with apes and produce sterile hybrids like mules[7]. Even that great light of Enlightenment, Voltaire(1694-1778), subscribed to this doctrine and placed the blacks at the bottom rung of the evolutionary ladder. And like Atkins, he also believed that blacks races could interbreed with apes.[8] As late as 1857, the head of the French school of anthropology, Armand de Quartrefages, believed in the sterility of *Mulattos*, the offspring of white and black parents[9]

It was in this sorry state of its being that the science of anthropology was invoked to justify the superiority of white races. The colour of skin for classification of humankind became a prime criterion to which all European scholars finally succumbed. In the late 17th century Francois Bernier, French philosopher, declared that races of man could be divided on the basis of their skin pigment According to him these races were the white Europeans, yellow Chinese and Japanese and black Negroes. The word "race" in the modern sense was first used by him.

Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), about whom the saying was "God created and Linnaeus tabulated", in the classification of anthromorpha in his 1795 book "Systema Naturae" gave a pride of place to the European race whom he described as " white, ingenious, inventive, sanguineous". The Asiatic were described as "yellowish, proud, avaricious and melancholy" and the Negroes were described as " black, crafty, lazy, careless and apathetic".

Buffon (1707-1788) in his "Natural History" declared that a Negro was to a white man as a donkey was to a horse.

David Hume in his 1742 essay "National Character" opined that all those races who lived near the polar regions and between the tropics were naturally inferior to the white European race. "There was never a civilisation of any complexion other than the white" he wrote. [10]

Charles White (1728-1809), a Manchester surgeon, was of the opinion that to start with mankind was black and that the white race emerged only after a long process of gradation and was therefore the most removed from the primitive brute creation and hence this race was most beautiful with superior intellectual powers[11].

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840), who is considered to be the father of physical anthropology, in his book "On the Natural Varieties of Mankind" divided humanity in five different races, depending on their skin pigment, nasal and cephalic indices: white Caucasians, yellow Mongolian, black Ethiopian, red American Indian, and brown Malay. Although Blumenbach was most emphatic that researchers should avoid value judgements and inferences, he himself could not resist the temptation of placing the white race at the top of the racial pyramid created by him.

This pride in the white race was to increase unchecked as a result of the European achievements by the middle of the 19th century, when Europe dominated the world both politically and economically.

Thus, the Europeans of the scientific age, having freed themselves of the Biblical notion of *Adam* as a common father of mankind, and having established their white race as the superior race, were looking for new ancestors.

It was the science of linguistics which provided them with new ancestors and gave them a name - **Aryan.** This term was originally borrowed by Anquetil du Peyron (who came to India in the 18th century to study the Parsee language and religion) from Herodotus to designate the Persians and the Medes.

However, with the discovery of the wealth of ancient literature of

India and Iran in which the ancient Indians and Iranians did designate themselves **Aryans**, the term Aryan gained widespread acceptance thanks to Friedrick Schlegel, the author of the book "On the language and wisdom of the Indians."

In the third part of this book, Schlegel gave an anthropological twist to the discovery of Indo-European languages by deducing from the relationship of these languages, a relationship of race. And this concept was given world wide authority by the German Max Muller and the Frenchman Earnst Renen, the two great popularises of the Aryan theory. Max Muller is reported to have said that same blood ran in the veins of English soldiers as in the veins of dark Bengalis. By about 1860 this concept had become the intellectual patrimony of a majority of the European scholars, notably Gottfried Herder, Hippolyte Taine, Marcelin Berthelot, Penka and Karl Ritter, who added to the Aryan myth by stressing that the language. literature and religions of the ancient Aryans showed that they were all linked by common blood and spirit..

At the same time European linguists gave rise to a peculiar fallacy that the Indo-European language, which was of inflected type, was superior to analytic (Chinese) or agglutinative (Dravidian, Uralic Turkish, etc.) types. Thus superiority of race, language and culture were all brought under the name of Aryan.

Max Muller's conception of an idealised Aryan race was adopted by many an European writers such as Thomas Carlyle, James Anthony Froude, Charles Kingsley, Houston Stewart Chamberlain and the French Count Joseph de Gobineau. It were the last two who really inspired the Nazi race mystics to dream up the concept of a master Aryan race.

The European intellectual atmosphere in the 19th and early 20th century was obsessed with Aryans. Since in the course of their expansion the Aryans overran countries which had reached a higher level of civilisation than they had themselves, European scholars, completely oblivious to the fact that primitive nomadic people have often conquered more advanced civilisations, credited the Aryans with some special intellectual and physical prowess.

Christian Lassen described the Aryans as the most highly organised, the most enterprising and most creative and they, being

the youngest, were the most perfect because the earth produced the most perfect species of plants and animals at a late date. Even such a sober pre-historian as V. Gordon Childe declared that "the Aryans were fitted with exceptional mental endowments and were promoters of true progress"[12]

Now the question arose where did these Aryans come from? Although no longer subscribing to the Biblical shibboleth, the Europeans scholars had not been able to free themselves from the Biblical traditions entirely.

The Bible had suggested that the origin of mankind could lie to the east of Palestine as the Garden of Eden was located in the East. Therefore, even in the 18th-19th centuries, these scholars were seeking the origin, if not of the whole mankind, of at least the white Aryan race in the East. During the same time these scholars were becoming more and more aware of the ancient wisdom of China and India. They could not obviously locate their Aryan ancestors in the land of the yellow Chinese.

India was, of course, a different matter as the Indians had been certified as a white race by Francios Bernier, who visited India in early 17th century A.D, and had stated that " their colour is only accidental and is due merely to the fact that they are exposed to the sun".

Furthermore, Lassen and Theodor Poesch had found that the highest castes in India were the whitest. India had in fact been a source of great mystery and fascination to the West since antiquity and even the scholars of Enlightenment were not immune to her charm. Voltaire assigned a hoary antiquity to India and strove to demonstrate that the Biblical Adam had taken over everything, even his name, from India. Playing fast and loose with etymology he derived the name of Abraham from Brahman.

He believed that everything that the West had, astronomy, astrology and metempsychosis had come from the banks of the Ganges. Jacob-Joseph Gorres believed that Abraham had come from India which he regarded as the birth place of humanity. Friedrich Creuzer, another German scholar of note, attributed the beginning of Judaism to a primitive Brahmanism which he called the most natural religion. Following Voltaire, he believed that the

name Abraham was derived from Brahman and that of his wife Sara's from Saraswati and that both of them were Brahmins [13].

Schopenhauer, who longed to be a child of India, produced a corpus of pro-Indian and pro-Aryan arguments. Hegal compared the discovery of Sanskrit to that of a new continent because in his views it established historic ties between the German people and the people of India. It was for this reason that he supported the conception of Indians as the colonisers of Europe. This Indian theory also received backing from a celebrated astronomer of his times, Jean Baily, who on the basis of some mathematical calculations placed the Aryans in the valley of the Ganges where they developed the arts of civilisation.

However, it was Friedrich Schlegal again who was most responsible for promoting the myth of India being the original home of the Aryans. In a series of lecture delivered from 1805 onwards he declared that "Everything, absolutely everything is of Indian origin". He believed that as a result of some obscure mingling a new people had formed itself in Northern India and that these people goaded by "some impulse higher than the spur of necessity" had marched towards the West. He boldly portrayed columns of masterful men marching from the east, founding empires and civilising the West [14].

Thus we see that a wide variety of European scholars located the Aryans between the Indus and the Ganges. This hypothesis of an Indian origin from its very beginning rested on emotional judgements which were based on the undocumented speculation of the Bible. Another factor was the supposed high antiquity of Sanskrit and its apparent linguistic purity which led to the belief that the parent Indo-European language had originated in India and from there spread westward. Alas, all these fancy theories had to be discarded in the light of new knowledge provided by archaeology, modern anthropology and ethnology before the end of the 19th century.

It started with Roger Latham, British ethnologist, who was the first to argue that the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans was more likely located in Europe than in Asia, and much less in India. Then there were other scholars who argued that there was no organic relation between language and race and that the Indo-

Europeans even before their final dispersal had not been a racially homogeneous entity but belonged to different racial stocks. It was now regarded that a Sanskrit speaking branch of these Indo-Europeans had invaded India through the Western passes rather than the other way around.

Even Max Muller who had once declared racial identity between the Bengalis and the Englishmen had to admit that " Aryan, in scientific language, is utterly inapplicable to race. It means language and nothing but language". Modern scholarship no longer uses Indo-Europeans as a racial identity. To add insult to injury the language of the Hittites, the Mittanis and the Greek of Linear B tablets from Crete proved to be older than Sanskrit and modern philologists also found that phonetically Sanskrit was not as close to the parent Proto-Indo-European as many other European languages.

But as long as these theories, particularly the one that held India to be the original home of the Aryans, were accepted they, as we shall soon see, exercised a profound influence on the Hindus of the time and continue to stir the imagination of a certain type of scholars even now. Recently, Bhagwan Gidwani, wrote a work of fiction "Return of the Aryans", apparently based on these long forgotten and discredited theories, in which he reiterated that India was the original home of the Aryans and they left it thousands of years ago to civilise the world and came back after fulfilling their mission.

This book was received with great enthusiasm and in 1996 it also received an award from a literary institution in India. This goes to show that the Hindu mind is still obsessed by the early 19th century Aryan myth.

3. European Racial Theories And Their Impact On Indian Historians

Long before the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilisation, when the Europeans ideas of Aryan race, linguistics and culture were applied to the writing of Indian history the European historians, the British in particular, thought that everything that was worthwhile in Indian history was the work of Aryans. Here is an extract from Hunter's monumental work of 1875 "The Imperial

Gazetteer of India". "Our earliest glimpse of India discloses two races struggling for the soil, one was the fair skinned people who had lately entered by the north-western passes; a people of Aryan, literally noble, lineage, speaking a stately language, worshipping friendly and powerful gods. The other was a race of lower type, who had long dwelt in the land, and whom the lordly newcomers drove back before them into the mountains or reduced them to servitude in the plains."

Similar sentiments are expressed by Vincent Smith: "when India as a whole is looked at broadly, without theorising, anybody can see that the population comprises two main physical types. The tall fair-skinned, long nosed and often handsome type is chiefly found in northern India among the upper class Hindus... The tall fair skinned people are clearly descended from immigrants from the Northwest."[15].

Even a modern writer, Prof. F. Hardy of the Kings College, London, believes that "the Indian religious history begins with the arrival of nomads who called themselves Aryas, 'the noble ones', some time around the penultimate millennium B.C.E". And he goes on to say that these Aryas with their aggressive spirit and superior military tactics conquered the local inhabitants and pushed them into less desirable places.[16]

Such wholesome praise for their Aryan ancestors came as manna from heavens to the Indian (read Hindu) mind parched by seven hundred years of Muslim rule and by the contumely heaped upon Hindu culture by both the Muslims and the Christian missionaries who came to India in the wake of European conquerors such as the Portuguese, the French and the British.

The very idea that they were genetically a part of that white race which was ruling the world economically and politically was intoxicating. It is said that some upper class Indians took this literally and identified themselves with the British in the belief that they and the British shared in a common heritage of blood, language and culture. Keshab Chunder Sen likened the coming of the British to India to the " reunion of parted cousins, the descendants of two different families of the ancient Aryan race." [17] In our own time Nirad Choudhuri migrated to England to save his Aryan soul from India, the "Continent of Circe".

The British who were the colonial overlords of India, while conceding the affinity of Sanskrit with European languages and the superiority of the white Aryan race, did not think much of the Hindus and their culture. It was James Mill. the British scholar, who produced the first comprehensive history of India. It was published in 1817 and Mill was highly critical of ancient Indian civilisation. He saw no redeeming feature in it and considered the Hindu society as puerile and static ruled by a succession of despots. Mill's views on Indian history were shared by many writers of the day. Besides these scholars there were a host of Christian missionaries, both in India and abroad, who looked contemptuously down upon the Hindu religion and called it the work of a devil. The British historians had also denied any great antiquity to Indian history. They believed that India had no history worth the name prior to Alexander's invasion

The Indian intelligentia, by now educated and trained in western ways, took up the pen to refute these interpretations of Indian history and culture. Drawing their inspiration from the writings of the European Orientalists, whom they often quoted extensively, the Indian scholars indulged in an unashamed glorification of their ancient Aryan culture and sought to prove the superiority of their religion and culture and gave a clarion call "back to the Vedas." They credited the Aryans with every peak of achievement not only in Hindu culture but the world civilisation at large. Kewal Motwani's *Manu Dharmasastra* is an example in this genre. In this voluminous book the author claimed to prove that even the Polynesians and the Maoris were the descendants of the Aryans.

The nationalist Indian historians, motivated no doubt by the struggle for independence, took up the Aryan cause with alacrity and depicted the Aryan society in glowing terms and strove to prove from ancient Indian writings such as the Epics, the Puranas and the Law Books that ancient Indians had democratic traditions as good as those of the ancient Greeks or even the modern West European democracies.

Since at that particular point in time the discovery of Hittite and Mittani documents and the decipherment of linear B documents of Crete had not taken place, Sanskrit was regarded by European scholars as the oldest form of Indo-European speech and the Vedas the most ancient literature in that language. Thus the Indian

scholars/historians came to look upon the Vedas as the repository of all human knowledge and rational thought even anticipating some of the modern scientific discoveries.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, I was a student in a school run by Arya Samaj, an orthodox Hindu socio- religious society. India being under the British at that time, the early spectacular victories of German arms against the British, thrilled us immensely. Our teacher of Vedic studies attributed these victories to the superiority of German science which, he declared stoutly, they had borrowed from our ancient Vedas. He in fact accused the Germans of stealing the original Vedas from India in the early 19th century. The teacher was a learned and an honest man and firmly believed in what he said.

The teacher was not alone in this belief. There are so called scholars who believe that the ancient Aryans had also developed aeroplanes, atomic bombs and many more modern inventions. A book recently published in the United states by some Indian Americans also claims that the ancient Vedic texts displayed knowledge of computer sciences on the part of the ancient Indians.[18] This shows how far the myth of Aryan superiority, fed partly by European scholarship and partly by the fantasy of a frustrated and subjugated Hindu mind, affected the thinking of even the learned Hindus from mid 19th century onward.

Although, as we have mentioned above, the myth of Aryan race, its superiority and its original Indian home was exploded as early as the late 19th century, the Indian historians of the traditionalist school continue to ride the hobby horse of Aryanism even now. They believe that the Aryans were the pre-Harappan denizens of India and the real authors of the Harappa Civilisation and that the arts of civilisation spread from the Indus Valley to West Asia and beyond. Some of these scholars, basing their argument on astronomical data and other clues of doubtful veracity found in ancient Hindu texts went to great lengths in assigning an astonishingly remote antiquity to their Aryan ancestors. Not so long ago I came across an article in a magazine published by a Hindu Temple of the greater Washington area in which the author had claimed that Rama, the prince of Ayodhya and hero of the Indian Epic *Ramayana*, had lived and ruled over vast Indian empire some 18 million years ago. He had based his findings on

the Hindu cosmology of the four *Yugas* which is just a piece of mythology.

So long India was under the colonial rule the use of such flawed research as an ideological weapon in the national struggle for independence could perhaps be justified for keeping up the nation's sagging morale. However, with the dawn of independence it was a fond hope that Indian historians would henceforth be more realistic and objective in their assessment of the Indian past. Alas, with a few honourable exceptions the so called nationalist historians are still fixated on the Aryan myth dished out by Schlegel and Max Muller. For such historians mythology carries more weight than history and they write history as it should have been and not as it was. With the rise of Hindu nationalism, particularly during the last 30 years or so, this tendency has been exacerbated. During their first brief stint in power in Uttar Pradesh in 1992, the Bharatya Janata Party, a fundamentalist Hindu political party, introduced a history curriculum in the schools wherein India was declared to be the original home of the Aryans. '– As a result of the general elections held in 1998-99 this party is now accupying the seat of power at New Delhi, the capital of the country, and its ideologues are in a frenzy to revise the Indian history in accordance with their obscurant views.' On my last visit to India in early 1998 I saw a book in the display window of a book shop: it was titled " Vedic Civilization of the Indus Valley".

4. India is not the Original Aryan Home

The cornerstone of the argument that India was the original home of the Aryans is that there is not a single passage in the entire Rg Veda to suggest clearly that Aryans were conscious of entering a new country or that they ever had any connection with the world outside of India. This, as pointed out earlier, may be due to a complete lack of interest in history by the ancient Aryans. For example the Hindus produced a large amount of literature on various subjects prior to and during the Muslim invasions and yet there is not one Hindu text of that period which even alludes to the Arab conquest of Sindh or the repeated invasions of Subuktgin, his son Mahmud of Ghazna or the sack of Bengal by a handful of Turks under Bakhtiar Khalji.

Earlier, the Hindu writers and thinkers had, as stated above, shown a complete ignorance of the invasions of Greeks and other foreign invaders. If one were to confine oneself to the study of the Hindu literature one would get the impression that such invasions never took place. But they did and our history-blind ancestors

just took no notice of those events. Therefore, the absence of evidence should not be construed as the evidence of absence. Furthermore, it may be noted that the extant Vedic literature is but a part of the entire literary output of the period. The bard-priests had in fact composed so many hymns that by 1000 B.C.E. this body of oral poetry had grown to such unmanageable proportions that it had to be weeded and cut down to a proper size.

The result was the present text of the Rg Veda, i.e., the *Sakala* recension, which therefore represents a fairly late stage in the development of this Veda. The text of this recension has no doubt been preserved scrupulously and its unchangeability after its codification is an uncontested fact. But the same cannot be said of the time prior to such codification. During the centuries that elapsed between the composition of the *mantras* of the Rg Veda and their codification into inviolable *Samhita* texts, the *mantras* were, in the absence of writing, handed down by families of priests by word of mouth. They were therefore exposed to considerable change in the process of such transmission.

If the Epics and the *Puranas* could be revised time and again there is no reason to believe that the Vedic texts could not similarly be altered prior to the interdiction being placed on such revision. In fact Bloomfield and Edgerton in their work "Vedic Variants" have demonstrated this. Furthermore, there were many other recensions besides the *Sakala*. Bits and pieces of at least two such recensions viz. *Baskala* and *Valakhilya* have come down to us though the full texts have been lost forever. Who knows what valuable information about the Aryans has been lost in the disappearance of such other texts.

Moreover, the Rg Vedic hymns were properly edited, written down and commented upon by a line of south Indian Brahmins only in the middle of the 14th century C.E. in the southern empire of Vijayanagar. These editors had neither any connection with nor knowledge of the Punjab or any extra Indian territory. Thus many names of places, rivers and people even in the present text were an enigma to them and remain so even to this day. There is at least one point on which scholars/historians of all shades agree and that is that the languages of the ancient Iranians and Indians were so close that they could be called dialects of one and the

same language. This closeness of language means that the ancestors of the two people must have lived together before parting to go on their own ways.

The Iranian Avestan literature does mention an ancient homeland called *Aryanvaejo*. This has been tentatively identified by some scholars as modern Azerbaijan. [19]. As we shall show later, the Indo-Iranian tribes did live in the Pontic-Caspian area at one time.

Another argument employed by the traditionalists is that there was no archaeological record to show any major intrusion in northern India. The Aryans were a barbaric people, good at destroying but incapable of creating civilisation. They entered India on the ruins of Indus valley culture and destroyed whatever was left of it at least in the Punjab. Their chief god Indra was called *Purandra* - destroyer of forts. Destruction of the last vestiges of Indus civilisation is alluded to in the Rg Veda (6.27.5).

After the Aryan incursions/migrations, the cities, urban life and the art of writing completely vanished and India was plunged into an age of darkness lasting almost a thousand years. The Aryans did not build anything. The root word for brick "ista" does not occur in this Veda. Likewise the words for writing or reading are also conspicuous by their absence as during this period the Vedic literature was handed down by word of mouth.

The constantly shifting settlements of the early Aryans, necessitated by their need to find fresh pastures for their cattle wealth, were made of daub and wattle and left no permanent mark like the ruined cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Some material evidence of Aryan intrusion is available from the lowly grave goods. Unfortunately even this evidence is rather meagre because soon after their arrival in India they gave up burying their dead and adopted cremation. The cremation is definitely more hygienic but it is very unhelpful to the archaeologist.

One British scholar who has had great influence on the thinking of traditional historians is Pargiter who has been compared to *Ved Vyasa*, the legendary editor/compiler of the Vedas and *Puranas*, by some Indian writers[20]. With painstaking research, Pargiter, tried to make some sense out of the tangled skein of our *Puranic* tradition. On the basis of this evidence he suggested that

the Aryans were autochthonous in India and that their original habitat was the region of *Prayaga* in what is now Uttar Pradesh state in India. [21]

As already stated above, the *Puranic* literature, as we know it now, was committed to writing rather late in the day when the main Aryan action had shifted to eastern India. The Punjab and other frontier areas, which were the first homeland of Aryans immigrants on Indian soil, had long been forgotten. In fact even as early as the period of *Satpatha Brahamana* (900 B.C.E) the Punjab was regarded as an impure land where people did not follow Aryan sacrificial rites. It was called *mleccha desh* - land of the barbarians - and even wheat, the staple food grain of the Punjabis, came to be called *mleccha bhojan* - food of the barbarians.[22] Obviously that area had been invaded and occupied by Iranians, scythians or some other foreign tribes. Moreover, the *Puranic* tradition reflects conditions prevailing in India not of the times when they were first composed but of the times round about the age of the *Mauryas, Sungas* and *Guptas* [4th century B.C.E to 6th century C.E] and cannot thus be relied upon on this subject.

At present the earliest traces of civilisation on the Sub-Continent have been found in Balochistan and they show distinct affinities to Iran. The rest of the subcontinent at that time was covered with dense forests and the present states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were jungles and swampland which could be settled only on the arrival of iron in India by about 1000 B.C.E.. On this reasoning alone Pargiter's theory can be contradicted.

India cannot be the original home of the Indo-European languages simply because the centre of gravity of these languages is towards Europe and not towards Asia in general and India in particular. As Prof. Mallory has pointed out, by the 1st century B.C.E., a period late enough to encompass most known Indo-European languages, a bulk of these languages such as Germanic, Celtic, Baltic, Thracian, Italic, Phrygian, Armenian, Greek, Illyrian, etc. were located within 10 degrees west longitude and 50 degrees east longitude [23]. Only two language groups located much farther Southeast of this geographical area were Tocharian and Indo-Iranian. It would therefore appear that these two language groups had moved away from the mass of other Indo-European languages rather than the other way around. Besides, Europe, with the

exception of three small areas of non-Indo European languages - Finnish, Hungarian and Basque, is solidly Indo-European in speech.

On the other hand nearly half of India even today remains non-Aryan in speech and even in the areas of Aryan speech there are large islands of non-Aryan speech adjacent to the four Dravidian speaking states of south India, particularly in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra. Outlying groups of Dravidian tongue exist in Chhota Nagpur region of Bihar and the Rajmahal hills near the Bengal-Bihar border. If the Aryans were indeed autochthonous in India, it is amazing that they should have crossed high mountains, traversed thousands of miles of deserts, swamps and dense forests to spread their language to the shores of Atlantic and yet failed to Aryanise the whole of India in language!

As per the present day distribution of languages in the Sub-continent, the Aryan language itself would appear to be intrusive having entered the sub-continent from Northwest. While doing so it drove a wedge in the unified fabric of the prior non-Aryan languages spoken in northern India. Remnants of a non-Aryan language, Brahui, are still available in the Baloch hills and parts of Sindh to the west of the Aryan speech area. This language, as we shall soon see, was once widely spoken in north-western part of the sub-continent. Other non-Aryan speech forms are to east and south of the present day Aryan speech areas.. In fact the Aryan speech spread to south and east in historic times for which we have reasonably sound evidence. For example Aryan language had not reached Bengal even in the time of Buddha.

It was only during the Mauryan period that a powerful movement of Aryan speakers of mixed origin from Bihar entered eastern India and took with them the speech of Magadha called *Magadhi-Apabhramsa* which ultimately became the mother of Assamese, Bengali and Oriya. Bengali, the most developed of the modern Indo-Aryan languages, even now gives the impression of being an Aryan idiom imposed on a non-Aryan substrate [24]. Similarly western India was at one time also non-Aryan in speech. We find that in the late Buddhist texts Gujerat was called a Dravidian land - *pancha-dravida.* The speakers of *Kurukh-Maltos*, a Dravidian speech form, now found in eastern India, are said to have moved from west to east through the Narbada valley.

Numerous place names in Maharashtra state in Western India still betray their Dravidian origins. Besides, Vedic Sanskrit itself, from the very beginning, shows considerable borrowing from prior non-Aryan languages. In additions to lexical borrowings it also demonstrates a series of *retroflex* or *cerebral* consonants such as *t, th, d, dh,* and *n* which are quite different from the dental *t, th,* etc. These *retroflex* consonants are not found in any European language. The Vedic Sanskrit therefore took them over either from the Dravidians or the Proto-Austroloids, the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India.

Besides, the Vedic literature shows that the Aryans felt a strong sense of tribal identity and cultural exclusiveness and separation from the local people who were both feared and despised by them. The Aryans called the autochthons with disparaging epithets such as noseless, black-skinned, phallus worshippers of crooked speech. This shows that the Aryans were new arrivals and had encountered a totally different type of people in this new land. Moreover, as per the Rg Vedic evidence the geographical knowledge of the Aryans about India did not extend beyond the Punjab. There is a mention of 25 rivers in the Rg Vedic hymns and all but two or three belong to the Indus system in what was pre-partition N.W.Frontier province and the Punjab.

The easternmost river of this domain was *Sarasvati* which is now extinct but was once a mighty river with Satluj as its tributary.. The river *Yamuna* is mentioned in three passages which indicates that some Aryan tribes and reached the western limits of the Gangetic plain. The river *Ganga* is mentioned only once and it appears to be a much later interpolation to this Veda. They had only a passing acquaintance with the present Pakistani province of Sindh. In their southward migrations they seem to have not gone beyond the Panchnad, the point where the united waters of the Punjab rivers flow into the Indus.

The Rig Veda knows nothing of the of the *Vindhya* mountains which divide Northern India from the Southern peninsula. The *pipal* tree finds no mention in it. It does not mean that this tree did not exist in the this region. It only means that it had no particular sanctity for the Aryans as it had for the Harappans or has for the present day Hindus. From this geographical data the scholars have concluded that when the Rg Veda was composed

the Aryans were mainly confined to the land between the Hindukush and *Yamuna* and that this Veda was given its final shape in the Ambala region. And above all, the material remains of the Harappa Culture do not reflect the kind of society described in the Vedic literature. All this evidence leads us to deny the Aryans a prior home in India.

5. Looking for the Original Home of the Indo-Aryans

As in the case of India, there is no reason to seek the original home of the Indo-Europeans in the more civilised areas of the ancient world such as Mesopotamia or the Mediterranean basin. On the contrary all the documentary and archaeological evidence points to the intrusive nature of these people in those regions.

We have to look for the forerunners of Indo-Europeans of Asia somewhere other than their "historical" seats. The search for the original home of the Indo-Europeans, their proto-history, and the timing and trajectory of their migrations has been exercising the minds of historians, linguists and archaeologists for almost two hundred years. They have been located variously at the north pole, north Africa, Anatolia, shores of the Pacific, Scandanavia and, as stated above, India.

As the Indo-Europeans were primitive nomadic pastoralists of diverse origins and uneven cultural development it is very difficult to pin them down archaeologically. As Prof. Mallory has said, "If the archaeological details are still a matter of controversy amongst the scholars, the Indo-European hypothesis is most certainly not. It is the only explanation that can convincingly account for why approximately half the earth's population speaks in languages clearly related to one another."[25].

If the only common heritage that the Proto-Indo-Europeans had was the language then we have to seek within it the clues to their original homeland. To quote Prof. Mallory again, "the Proto-Indo-European homeland is essentially the spatial expression of a vaguely defined temporal division of that linguistic continuum."[26]. One of the most widely recognised techniques for delimiting the Indo-European homeland is linguistic palaeontology - a process of reconstructing words which occur in a large number of Indo-European languages, both European and

Asian, and which cannot be shown to be loan words. For example, the words meaning "sheep" in many languages of the Indo-European family of languages are quite similar: "avis", "avis", "ovis". "oveja". "ovtsa", "Owis", and "ewe" in Lithuanian, Sanskrit, Latin, Spanish, Russian, Greek, and Old English respectively. Nearly 2000 words of Proto-Indo-European can similarly be reconstructed.

Such words are considered to be a part of the vocabulary of the Proto-Indo-European, the original language of the people in question. The idea behind this process is that if the words existed then the things denoted by them existed too and must have been familiar to the people who spoke that language. In this way we can deduce what kind of animals, plants and climate etc., the Proto-Indo-Europeans were familiar with and, hence which part of the world they lived in.

This is accomplished by comparing the reconstructed environmental, material and cultural vocabulary of the Proto-Indo-European with the archaeological and environmental records. The common vocabulary thus obtained suggests that before their dispersal the Indo-Europeans were a nomadic pastoral people. They had cattle, sheep and goats but the cattle were highly prized and constituted the main wealth of the people. They had no word for camel, ass, tiger or elephant. They were familiar with mead but had no knowledge of beer which is a produce of farmers.

They knew both rain and snow but their summers were very hot which suggests a continental climate. Above all, horse played an important part in the life, religion and rituals of these people. In fact, it is the Indo-European people who are credited with the domestication of this animal whose original habitat was the steppes of southern Russia and central Asia. It is believed that horse was first used by the tribes of Indo-European origin that lived in the steppes north of the chain of mountains adjacent to the Black and Caspian seas. The horse has ever since remained a special marker of the Indo-European people.

Based on the data thus provided by linguistic palaeontology scholarly opinion now holds that the Proto-Indo-European speakers occupied the Pontic-Caspian region during the 5th to 3rd millennium B.C.E. when that region saw the development of

the Tumuli or Kurgan culture.

By 3500 B.C.E. the bearers of Kurgan culture expanded westward into central Europe, the Balkan peninsula, Transcaucasia to become the ancestors of the Greeks and other Balkan people as also of the speakers of the languages such as Phrygian, Armenian and other extinct Anatolian languages. In the third millennium they expanded to north and central Europe becoming the ancestors of later Germans, Celts, Balts and Slavs and other Indo-European groups.

In the east they expanded as the Tocharians and Indo-Iranians. According to Marija Gimbutas the people who developed and spread the Kurgan culture were Indo-Europeans. Since we are here concerned mainly with the last group, it is time we left consideration of the mass of Indo-Europeans who expanded to the west and dealt with the antiquity of the Indo-Iranians in general and Indo-Aryans in particular.

In recent years archaeological evidence has been slowly accumulating to support the extension of material culture, economy and ritual behaviour from the Pontic-Caspian region eastwards to the Altai region. The eastern most culture of Altai region which later extended to the Tarim basin is known as "Afanasievo" culture and is equated with the migration of Tocharian speaking Indo-Europeans who are said to have reached that area round about 3000 B.C.E. even before the general migration of Proto-Indo-Europeans in different directions.

The other group which expanded to the east was composed of the future Indo-Iranians. It is now generally accepted that these peoples had lived together west of the Caspian. This is proved by the fact that they contributed a series of lexical items pertaining to animal husbandry and technology to the Finno-Ugric peoples who lived immediately to their north roughly between the middle Volga and the Ob rivers.

The Indo-Iranian migrations started round about 2500 B.C.E. Some Russian scholars believe that the extension of Pontic-Caspian culture to the steppes of Russia bounded on the north by southern Siberia, in the east by Intysh-Ob river and in the south by Pamirs of Tadzhikistan and represented by "*Andronovo*" culture - an

archaeological label which covers a series of related cultures - was the work of Indo-Iranians.

This culture has genetic relation to the culture of Pontic-Caspian area such as stock breeding economy, domestic horse, chariots, ceramic forms and kurgan burials. The archaeological evidence from sites in this area provides us with some of the finest parallels with common reconstructions of Indo-Iranian culture. Burial sites contain a large quantity of sacrificed animals especially horses which played such an important part in the later Indo-Aryan rituals.

These cultures are dated to about 2000 B.C.E. or later. It is for this reason that it is often argued that these steppe cultures are too recent in time to be the patrimony of the undifferentiated Indo-Iranians: they most probably belong to the Iranians. Even in historical times this area belonged to the Iranian speaking steppe nomads such as *Sogdians, Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans,* etc. The Iranian languages continued to rule the roost in this area till they were replaced by the Turkic languages in the 8th century C.E. We have therefore to look for the ancestors of the Indo-Aryans somewhere else.

Recent archaeological excavations have suggested that the trajectory of Pontic-Caspian movement were not only to the east but also towards the south of the Aral sea. While the bulk of the tribes moved to the east becoming the basal population of the steppe some groups moved south. We have therefore to seek the ancestors of Indo-Aryans south of the Asiatic steppes. The movement of the Indo-Iranian tribes south of the steppes was gradual and protracted through central Asia. In their southward march these tribes had to pass through some proto-urban sites of Central Asia such as such as Dashli and Sapalli and many other culture sites. These sites in fact do show the influence of *Androvan culture,* and the pottery recovered at these sites provide some close resemblance to the ceramics of the Gandhara Culture of Swat valley of Pakistan about which we shall talk a little later.

It appears that near about the end of the third millennium B.C.E these tribes had settled down somewhere on the borderlands of what is now Iran and the former Soviet republic of Turkmanistan, that is, between the basin of Amu Darya and south east Caspian

sea. The bronze age settlements of Shah Tepe, Tureng Tepe and Tepe Hissar in Southeast Caspian area collapsed at about this time indicating the arrival of the newcomers. The long march from the Asian steppes to their new habitat also gave these tribes time to develop their Indo-Iranian dialect into a proto-Indo-Aryan or archaic Sanskrit.

The late Roman Ghirshman had identified the Gorgan region in Southeast Caspian as Indo-Aryan. It is here that the domestic horse, chariots and gray ware appear for the first time. The horsemanship, chariotary and gray ware were a special mark of the Indo-Aryans. At no time prior to the incursion of the Mittani, an Indo-Aryan people about whom we shall talk a little later, horse and chariot-centred warfare was known to west Asia. By about the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C.E these Indo-Aryans also appear to have penetrated into Afghanistan and the Indus valley in the east. Unfortunately due to a complete lack of written texts and extreme paucity of archaeological record, the timing and trajectory of their migrations is still a matter of scholarly controversy. Since, at that time, written records were available only in the lands of south-west Asia, we have to look there for possible clues to the expansion of these people.

6. Indo-Aryans in West Asia

The first stirrings of Aryan speaking people in west Asia are discernible in the 16th Century B.C.E. We learn from Babylonian records that *Samsuiluma*, son and successor of great *Hamurabi*, defeated a *Kassite* king in 1741 B.C.E. The *Kassites* are an unknown people of Asianic origin who are first mentioned in the Elamite texts of late 3rd millennium B.C.E. They were relatively unimportant during this period. They were known to the Assyrians as *Kassaioi*.

Strabo places them north of Tehran at Caspian Gates. It has been suggested that the names of the city of Kazvin as also of Caspian sea could have been derived from these people. By 1800 B.C. they appear to have settled in the Hamadan-Kermanshah areas of western Iran. It is at this time that they seem to have been penetrated by an Aryan military aristocracy which led them to the conquest of Babylon by 1595 B.C.E. The *Kassite* kings bore Indo-Aryan names such as Inda (Vedic *Indra*) and worshipped

Indo-Aryan gods such as Shuriash (Vedic *Surya*) and Marutash (Vedic *Maruts*) etc. The horse was the sacred animal of the *Kassites* and it is they who introduced the use of this noble animal to Mesopotamia. Its later Babylonian name *susu* seems to havs been derived from early Sanskrit name *asua* or *asva.*

Next we consider the Hurrians yet another Asianic people of unknown origins. They appear in Mesopotamia east of Tigris in the mid-3rd millennium. As the cuneiform records show, in succeeding centuries they spread westward securing for themselves positions of importance in the administration of a number of states in Mesopotamia. However, they remained peripheral to the political happenings in the great centres of Mesopotamian civilisation. What transformed this group of unknown people into a formidable political force was the Aryan military aristocracy which established itself as the ruling caste over them. Between 1600-1500 B.C.E. written texts, wherever available, show a curious symbiotic relationship between the Hurrians and the Aryans in which the former are the subjects and the later, generally their superior, the rulers.

By the 3rd quarter of 16th century B.C.E. a number of strong enclaves of these Aryo-Hurrians were established throughout Southwest Asia which later coalesced to form a unified state known as *Mittani* destined to become a powerful force with which pharaohs of Egypt were proud to have military and matrimonial alliances. Although the ruling Indo-Aryan aristocracy soon lost their language and adopted the Hurrian vernacular, the onomasticon retained Aryan names replete with the infixes of the principal Vedic gods *Indra, Mitra, Varuna* etc. Aryan customs such as cremation instead of interment, horse breeding and training, love of chariot racing and designation of the ruling aristocracy by the term *Maryannu* (Sanskrit *marya* = a young warrior) also lingered on.

We have a written record from Mesopotamia, and Syria of a considerable number of personal names dating from 15th to 14th centuries B.C.E.

Nearly a third of these names can now be identified with Indo-Aryans. During the period of their expansion an Aryo-Hurrians push towards Egypt must have taken place because we know from

the Amrana documents that by the close of the 15th century a large number of ruling families in the towns of Palestine and Syria bore Indo-Aryan names: *Biridaswa* of Yenoam, *Suwardata* of Hebron, *Yasdata* of Taanach and *Indurata* of Achshaph etc. It is believed that the Hyksos, who invaded Egypt in the 17th century B.C.E and ruled over it for almost 200 years, included some Aryo-Hurrian elements as well. Many of the names of pre-Israelites inhabitants of Palestine used in the old Testament such as *Hivites, Jebusites and Girgashites* etc. can be assumed to refer to these Indo-Aryan groups.[27]

The presence of these Indo-Aryan elements, who by 1450 B.C.E. formed more than a third of the population of Palestine, has led Prof. Albright to observe that there was a time when Indian deities such as *Indra, Surya, Yama* were once briefly worshipped in Palestine [28]

It is clear from the above brief discussion that the *Mittani* linguistic data are already specifically Indic and not common Indo-Iranian in kind and that the Mittani were close relatives of Indo-Aryans and less closely related to the Iranians. It therefore indicates that Indo-Iranian linguistic unity must have become sundered before the Indic element reached Mesopotamia. In fact the earliest Iranian speaking people emerge into history in the 9th century B.C.E. when the Assyrian texts record the presence of Medes and Persians in western Iran. The presence of Indo-Aryan elements in west Asia is based on documents which can be dated with a reasonable accuracy. We cannot push these dates back prior to the 16th century B.C.E. at the most. There is no trace of these racial elements in Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine prior to that date. However, the intrusion of Indo-Aryans amongst the *Kassites* and the *Mittanis* was not thorough going and was confined to the ruling dynasts only who were otherwise assimilated by the native population. Moreover the language of the *Mittani* documents is a very archaic form of Sanskrit, even more archaic than the Rg Vedic Sanskrit, and looks like the residue of a dead language.

All this evidence suggests that the symbiosis of the Indo-Aryan elements with the *Kassites* and the *Hurrians* must have taken place much before the 16th century B.C.E.

As mentioned above the proto-Indo Aryans were present on the

borderlands of what is now Iran and South East Caspian prior to 2000 B.C.E. It would therefore appear that it was from this region that they moved south first in trickles to account for the Indo-Aryan elements in the *Kassites* and the *Mittani* and later in a full scale migration forming a broad continuum across west Asia. These people called their leaders Airan, Aryan or Arya.[29]. This leads one to believe that the land of Iran got its name from them. Thomas Burrow has rightly argued that the Iranian plateau was first occupied by the Indo-Aryans[30]. The names of *Rasa, Sarasvati and Bahlika* were brought to India by them from Iran and applied to two Indian rivers and an Indian province. Jaan Puhvel has also suggested that Indic contingent first moved south to Iran and that the Iranians represent a late migratory wave in their wake [31]. Prof. Marija Gimbutas, one of the leading supporter of the Pontic-Caspian area being the original Indo-European homeland, has, however, proposed that the Indo-Aryan elements originating in the pontic-Caspian area first entered Iran from Southwest Caspian (modern Azerbaijan?) and from there spread to India [32]. Herbert Wendt has also suggested that the Aryans entered India from the Iranian region [33]

In fact Hildebrandt had suggested that some parts of Rg Veda were composed while the Indo-Aryans were still in Iran [34]. In his somewhat idiosyncratic book "Date of Mahabharata Battle", S.B. Roy has also shown that some of the Rg Vedic action took place in Iran [35]

It has to be kept in mind that before the reforms of Zarathustara the Indo-Iranians shared the same religious complex.. Vedic gods such as *Yama, Mitra, Trita or Aptya, Vata, Apam Napat etc* and some mythological characters such as *Srinjayas, Sushravas* and *Kakshivan Ausija, i.e., Kaviya Usanas* whose daughter *Devayani* was married to king *Yayati*, have all been traced to Iran. The great god *Varuna* of the Rg Veda was also worshipped by the Iranians under the title *Asura*. This epithet remained attached to Varuna in the Rg Veda till the very word *Asura* came to denote demons. In Iran, under the reforms of Zarathustara, *Asura* became *Ahura* the great god of the Zoroastrians.

It is interesting to note that a Vedic sage by the name of *Vasa Asvaya* thanks kings *Balbhuta* and *Taruksha* for the gifts bestowed upon him including a gift of one hundred camels. This animal is

rare in Indian tradition. It was even unknown to the Indus valley people as it does not appear on any of their extant seals. Neither have we found any bones or other skeletal remains of this animal in the core region of this civilisation. The camel appears to have entered the Indian scene only after its collapse.

The camel was domesticated in some remote parts of Arabia during the second millennium, appearing rather suddenly in west Asia round about the end of the 13th century B.C.E. It is reputed that it was the Arameans who succeeded in utilising the mobility and long range stamina of this animal. Thus, this particular passage of the Rg Veda could have been composed prior to the arrival of the Indo-Aryans in India when they were still in west Asia which was familiar with this animal.

As mentioned above, the Iranians first appear in history in the middle of 9th century B.C.E. However, when they are encountered by the Assyrians they seem to have been settled in their lands for centuries. It has been suggested by Burrow that the Iranian expansion on the plateau started about 14th century B.C.E. Iran is a fairly large land but has few fertile areas. The centre of the plateau is an arid salt desert. The newcomers therefore had to push the previous occupants of the fertile land by force. And in this manner the Iranians split the Indo-Aryan continuum that spanned Southwest Asia and Iran either by absorbing the Indic elements or driving them to India in the east and isolating the *Mittani* in the west.

This process of the domination of the Iranian tableland by Iranians tribes was in fact hastened by the reforms of the fire brand *Zarathushtra* who completely broke away from the earlier common religious complex of the Indo-Iranians and demonized the Indo-Aryan gods. Burrow has pointed out that some of the pejorative used in the Zoroastrian religion's holy writ, the *Avesta,* for the Indo-Aryan gods were derived from the earlier Indo-Aryan substrate.

Zarathushtra, it may be mentioned, is believed to be title given to a series of teachers rather than the name of a particular teacher. [36] The traditional *Zarathushtra* is assigned a date of about 600 B.C.E. He could not be the first of the said teachers because the language of the *Gathas*, said to be authored by him, resembles

that of the *Vedas* in its archaism. The author of these *Gathas* has to be assigned a much earlier age as the traditional date of 600 B.C.E is much too modern.

Jaan Puhvel, S.B.Roy and B.K.Ghosh are also of the same opinion [37]. Burrow has argued for its placement somewhere in the 12th century B.C.E This date sits well with the general movement of Indo-Aryans towards India. However, they continued to occupy north-eastern areas of Iran comprising ancient Arachosia for quite a few centuries more. The Iranians bitterly contested this area with the *Vedic* Aryans and after a long struggle they finally succeeded in Iranization of the disputed territory and extended their sway to the Punjab and the Indus valley in good measure under Cyrus and Darius.

7. Aryans in India

India did not remain immune to these folk movements in the heart of Asia. However, the movement of Aryan speaking peoples into India was not an invasion. Webster's dictionary describes invasion as an "hostile entrance into the possessions of another; especially, the entrance of an attacking army into a country". At that point in time there was no country, no nation-centric state nor any national borders or checkpoints to cross or armies to fight. The land was open to all newcomers.

The Aryans had ranged far and wide from their original habitat with their entire families together with their cattle wealth and horses in search of water and new pastures. In the natural course of events they drifted towards the Indian subcontinent. For nomads there is neither a country nor any national borders. Examples are not wanting even in modern times. There are occasional reports of nomads criss - crossing the border between the hostile states of India and Pakistan in search new pastures and water.

Moreover the Aryan move into the Indian subcontinent was not a single event but covered many centuries involving many tribes who were often considerably different from each other. There must have been some conflicts between the indigenous people and the newcomers, glimpses of which are available even in the much later text of Rg Veda, but they were localised affairs and were not in the nature of clash of arms between the invaders and the invaded.

The arrival of Indo-Aryan elements in Indian subcontinent is evidenced by the findings of the remains of horses at various archaeological sites in the valley of the Indus. The Harappa civilisation was a horseless society. There is no archaeological evidence to show that this animal was used in pre Harappan or Harappan times. No trace of this animal has been found in the older cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro except for an enigmatic terra-cotta toy from Mohenjodaro which the traditional historians regard as the representation of a horse. [38]

The horse, as stated above, was first domesticated by the Indo-European tribes in the Russian steppes in the 4th millennium B.C.E It reached China only about 2000 B.C.E. It was introduced to West Asia by the Kassites in the 18th century B.C.E and it were the Hyksos, the so called shepherd kings, who introduced this animal to the horseless society of Egypt in the 17th century B.C.E. It is only after the demise of the core cities of the Indus Valley that horse makes its appearance in the Indian sub-continent [39] Any bones or plastic representation of a horse-like animal prior to these dates in Egypt, West Asia and the Indus valley has to be that of an onanger, a kind of wild ass common to both Asia and North Africa or that of *przewalski*, a very primitive, horselike animal found in Iran. It was a prize item of export from Elam in ancient times but is extinct now. Archaeologists have discovered wheeled toys in the ruins of the ancient Maya civilisation in Mesoamerica and yet all the pre-Columbian societies in the Americas had no wheeled vehicles.

Similarly this little toy found at Mohenjodaro does not mean that horse was a part of the Harappan society. It has to be kept in mind that India is not the natural habitat of this animal as it does not possess the type of environment in the matter of climate and vegetation which is conducive to breeding horses. Throughout its recorded history it has been an importer of horses from abroad, particularly Arabia, Iran and Central Asia. The ancient Hindu Armies lacked a cavalry arm. That is one of the reasons why the Hindu Armies were always defeated by the hardy horsemen of central and west Asia. The massive Hindu Armies composed mostly of elephants, chariots and infantry could not cope with the fast wheeling tactics of the cavalry of the foreign invaders.

We have to look for the Aryans in the wave of people who moved into the subcontinent about 2000 B.C.E. They are the ones whose remains have been found at cemetery *H* at Harappa and in the Swat valley both now Pakistan. Harappa site was for a time occupied by invaders with horses. The top layers of occupation at Harappa as well as cemetery *H* associated with it are therefore distinctly foreign and were identified by Gordon Childe as Aryan.

The painted funerary urns in the cemetery tell us about the beliefs of their makers. The common motifs of these urns are peacocks with hollow bodies containing a small horizontal human form. Then there are dogs, goats, bulls and cows arranged in a certain manner. In the case of the bovids some plant like forms are shown as growing from their horns. M.S.Vats, who excavated Harappa, has identified these animals as those who played an important part in the funerary rites mentioned in the Rg Veda. For example, the bulls are probably prototypes of the *Anustarni* and the cows are similarly *Utkranti* by holding whose tail the dead were to cross the rivers in the yonder. The dogs are *Yama's* hounds and the goat is the one who is sacrificed so that the god of fire may satiate his hunger and allow the soul of the dead to proceed unharmed to the blissful abode of the fathers.

Vats found several burials sites in cemetery *H* where goats or their parts were buried with the dead. In the words of F.R.Allchin, "one is inclined to follow Vats in seeing this phase (the culture represented by cemetery *H*) as representing the arrival of some sort of *Aryans* in the region and their interaction with the local population."[40] Besides, the discovery at Kalibangan of at least three fire places with brick or clay pillars in the centre and containing animal bones suggestive of Aryan sacrificial alters again shows that folks practising Vedic style sacrifices had arrived during the last stages of Harappan civilisation at that site, This provides us with material evidence of an intrusion of an early wave of the Indo-Aryans.

In the past few years Dr. A.R.Mughal of Pakistan has discovered many more cemetery *H* type sites in the Hakra valley, the heartland of Harappa civilisation. Next evidence comes from the *Gandhara Grave Culture* of Swat Valley. Here the ceramics found in the grave goods belong to a style called "gray ware" which have close similarities with the ware found in south central Asia and

northern Iran, precisely the location mentioned earlier of the Indo-Aryans habitat.

The burials of the Gandhara grave complex also differ from those of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and display close affinities to the burial sites in northern Iran and Turkmanistan. Examination of skulls, both male and female, has revealed that they bear close resemblance to the skulls found at Volga and Caucasus areas between 2500 B.C.E to 500 C.E. This similarity in the skulls has led Bernard and Dani to believe that the Gandhara Grave Culture belongs to the Aryan intruders.[41]

The most important find in the *Gandhara Grave Culture* is the ceremonial burial of horses which is again reminiscent of the Rg Vedic horse sacrifice. The movement into India of the cemetery *H* and *Gandhara Grave Culture* people tallies well chronologically with the movement of the Indo-Aryans into the borderlands of Iran mentioned earlier.

Within the same time frame there are a number of Indus sites where superimposed remains of alien cultures have been observed. These sites are at Chanhu-Daro in Sindh, Moghul Ghundai in Baluchistan and a couple of sites in the former Bhawalpur state in Pakistan where a decadent Indus phase was succeeded by a lower grade culture with affinities to northern Iran.

According to some scholars this early wave of the Aryans could be related to the ancestors of the language of eastern India - Kosala and Maghda - which later became the mother of Bengali, Assamese and Oriya.[42] The true *Vedic* Aryans may be associated with the second wave of people who, as discussed earlier, under Iranian pressure migrated to India from Iran. The period of such migration from Iran might have extend over a few centuries from say 14th to 10th centuries B.C.E. because there are signs of intrusive elements in many parts of India during this period.

After leading the life of pastoralists for a few centuries, they seem to have settled in small villages first in the Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan and then moved on towards the Ganga-Jamuna Doab. In the past few decades a number of sites in this area have been explored and excavated and all these sites have turned up a kind of pottery which is termed by the archaeologists as the Painted

Gray Ware and are dated to the early centuries of the first millennium B.C.E. These P.G.W sites show an increasing association with horses, chariots and cattle. As these findings seem to agree with the Vedic texts there is a general agreement amongst the scholars to correlate these P.G.W sites with Vedic Aryans.

Back in the twenties and thirties of this century when due to the fervour of nationalism our historians tended to look towards the past, particularly the Aryan past, through soft focus of sentimentality, one noted historian of the time, H.C Raychaudhuri, vexed eloquent about this land thus : " Through these regions glided sacred streams like the *Saraswati*, the *Drisdavati* and the *Malini*, the banks of which were dotted with serene hermitages of seers and sages, echoing with sweet songs of birds and clad with flowery attire of many colours; and the smiling plains in the neighbourhood were washed by the *Yamuna* and the *Ganga*, the waters of which reflected the splendour of the stately capitals of the warrior clans." [43].

This was nothing short of a wishful thinking as the P.G.W sites are not only smaller but much poorer as compared to the Harappan sites. These sites have proved to be simple , unobtrusive settlements of cultivators and cattle herders who lived in houses built of daub and wattle with rammed earth floors devoid of any grandiose life- style.

In the realm of material culture the Indo-Aryans bore no comparison to the indigenous people but, as stated above, they had a horse and a light horse drawn war chariot which gave them tremendous military advantage over the locals. Besides, the P.G.W folks are generally credited with the introduction and spread of iron technology which was superior to the copper technology. All these advantages, as Prof. Romila Thapar thinks, helped the Indo-Aryans to spread their language through a major part of northern India [44]. The adoption of language, culture and some aspects of spiritual values of the foreign elites by the natives are not lacking in Indian history.

When, with the arrival of Muslim rulers, Persian became the court language, Hindu elites did not hesitate to learn this language and adopt certain aspects of Muslim culture in the matter of dress and deportment. Islamic influence on Hinduism is too well known to

bear repetition here. The same phenomenon repeated itself when the British conquered India and introduced the English language.

Such is the bare-bone History of the Aryans accmulated painstakingly by generations of linguists, historians and archaeologists, bit by bit, potsherd by potsherd, and not by reading some obscure passage in a dimly understood language or studying astronomical data of doubtful veracity and then inventing tall tales to explain it. It is axiomatic in India to assign a hoary past to the Vedic Aryans on the basis of some *Puranic* texts.

Thus according to Prof. Bhargava they descended into the Punjab prior to 3000 B.C.E. as a result of a huge flood [45]. Others believe that *Vedic* culture is anterior to Harappa civilisation. Sometime ago Nirad Chaudhri wrote a whole book on Hinduism with nary a reference to Harappa culture. In this book he stoutly maintained that every bit of Hindus religion originated with his beloved Aryans. In writing this book he either showed a complete ignorance of the archaeological discoveries dating back to the early twenties of this century, or he deliberately ignored them. to prove his pet theory [46].

In the light of above discussions, we have to disabuse ourselves of these notions. The beginning of Vedic period may go back to 15th or 14th centuries B.C.E. but that too outside India in Iran and it ended in the 10th century B.C.E. in East Punjab. During the centuries following the immigration of the Indo-Aryans to India most of the ancient hymns composed by them on the Iranian soil were lost. So was the luster of the gods they worshipped there. This is proved by the fact the Indo-Iranians gods mentioned above find only a hymn here and a hymn there in their praise in the extant Rg Veda. Even the great god *Varuna*, who sat in his palace on the high and surveyed all the acts of men. meeting out punishment to the sinners, is invoked in far fewer hymns than *Indra. Agni or Soma.* His star declined before Indra on the Indian soil and he ended up being just a god of the ocean, an Indian Neptune.

What we know of the Hindu beginnings come from two radically different sources The remains of what we call Indus valley civilisation or Harappa civilisation dated to about the middle of the third millennium B.C.E, and the Indo-Aryans. The former had

material artefacts but no literary evidence and the latter had literary evidence but no clearly discernible material artefacts prior to 1000-800 B.C.E. Both these sources are thus incomplete.

But it is through the amalgam of both that Hinduism was born. In the process Aryans, while contributing a new language and some new ideas, lost to the older civilisation. The aim of this essay is to describe that in the first place the Harappa civilisation did not owe anything to the Indo-Aryans and secondly it were the Indo-Aryans who eventually succumbed to religious sensibilities of the older civilisation. We therefore make a start, in the next chapter with the origin of Harappa civilisation.

References

1. Amaury de Riencourt - Soul of India - Harper Btos. New York 1960 - p.16.
2. James Princep - Indian Antiquites - Vol.2 p.12.
3. Romila Thapar - A History of India - Penguin Books 1966 - p.28.
4. B.S.Upadhyaya - Feeders of Indian Culture - Peoples Publishing House New Delhi 1973 - Preface.
5. John Locke - An Essay concerning Human Understanding - Book iii - Chapter VI. p. 29.
6. Leon Poliakove - The Aryan Myth - Barnes and Noble New York 1996 - p.150
7. W.D.Jordan - White Over Black - North Carolina University Press - p17 & 31-32.
8. The Complete Works of Voltaire - Vol.VI. p.7
9. Armand de Quartrefages - Natural History of Man - 1857 p.162.
10. David Hume - Essays Moral, Political and Literary - London 1875 - p.244-58.
11. Charles White - An Account of Natural Gradation in Man And Different Animals - London 1790 - p.134-35

12. V.Gordon Childe - The Aryans - Barnes & noble NewYork 1993 - p.4.
13. Leon Poliakov - opp.cit. p.193.
14. Friedrich Schlegel - The Aesthetic & Miscellaneous Works - London 190 p.6-8.
15. Vincent Smith - Oxford History of India London 1918 - p.6-8
16. F.Hardy - Hinduism - The World Religions - Boston 1998 - p.571.
17. Keshab Chunder Sen - Lectures in India - Calcutta 1923 - p.323.
18. Computing Sciences in Ancient India - Ed. by T.R.N.Rao & S.Kak - U.S.L.Press.
19. B.S.Upadhayaya - opp.cit. p.13
20. S.B.Roy - Date of Mahabharata Battle - New Delhi 1976.
21. F.Pargitar - Ancient India Historical Tradition 1922.
22. Romila Thapar - Ancient Indian Social History - Some interpretations - p.194.
23. J.P.Mallory - In Search of the Indo-Europeans - London 1989 - p.152-53.
24. D.D.Kosambi - An Introduction to the Study of Indian History - Bombay 1958- p.112.
25. J.P.Mallory - opp.cit. p.22.
26. J.P.Mallory - opp.cit. - p.145.
27. Encyclopedia Britannica - Vol.XVII - p.937
28. W.F.Albright - The Archaeology of Palestine - Penguin Books England, 1954 - p.183.
29. Herbert Wendt - It Began In Babel - Weidenfeld & Nicolson - London 1963. p.118.
30. Thomas Burrow - Sanskrit Language - London 1965.
31. Jann Puhvel - Comparative Mytholgy - Baltimore 1987 - p.41.

32. Mentioned by J.P.Mallory opp. cit. p 183. In particular see the map drawn by Mallory. showing the Kurgan homeland and its expansion to the Esat according to Marija Gimbutas.

33. Herbert Wendt opp. cit. p.118.

34. Hildebrandt - Vedic Myths - Vol. 2.p.99.

35. S.B.Roy - opp.cit. p.165-87

36. David Christie-Murray - Reincarnation - Prism Press Dorset England 1988 - p,27.

37. S.B.Roy - opp.cit.

    Jann Puhvel - opp.cit. p.96.

    B.K.Ghosh - The Aryan Problem - Vedic Age - Bombay 1988 - p.207-8.

38. A.D.Pusalkar - The Indus Valley Civilization - The Vedic Age, Bhartaya Vidya Bhavan - Bombay 1988 - p.198.

39. Jonathan M. Kenoyer - Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley - Americal Institute of Pakistan Studies - 1998 - p.89.

40. F.R.Allchin - The Legacy of the Indus Civilisation - Possehl Edition of Harappa Civilization 1993 - p.388.

41. Bernard Wolram - Human Skeletal Remains From Bronze and Early Iron Age Cemetary of Timargarh (Dir State) Pakistan - ICAES VIII.

42. B & R Allchin - Birth of Indian Civilisation - Penguin Books, England, 1968 - p.342.

43. Hemchandra Ray chaudhuri - The Mahabharata: Some Aspects of its Culture - The Cultural Heritage of India - Calcutta 1962 - Vol.2. p.73.

44. Romila Thapar - opp.cit. p. 137-38.

45. P.K.Bhargava - India in.the Vedic Age - Lucknow 1971.

46. Nirad C.Chaudhuri - Hinduism - Oxford University Press 1980.

Harapppa Civilisation Where it all Began

2

1. Harappa Was Pre-Aryan

The ancient mound of Harappa, on the dried bank of river Ravi in the Punjab, came to the notice of General Cunningham, the first Director General of Archaeology of British India, as early as 1853. However, it was only in 1872-73 that he undertook some preliminary excavations. By that time, however, the railway builders had almost ruined the site by querying the bricks and stones from it to use as ballast in the railway lines. General Cunningham's preliminary excavations therefore did not yield any note worthy results. He did, however, find a seal with a deep engraving of a one horned animal and an inscription in an unknown script. This seal was a mark of an ancient high civilisation on Indian soil but the mid-19th century archaeologists knew nothing of it and the ancient Hindu literature shed no helpful light on it. General Cunningham therefore dismissed this seal as of foreign origin and the matter rested there for the next 50 years or so.

It was in 1921 that Daya Ram Sahni of the Department of Archaeology of the Government of British India, while digging at the Harappan site unearthed some more pictographic seals similar to the one discovered by Cunningham. At the same time another archaeologist. R.D Banerji. while digging at the site of Mohenjodaro, some four hundred miles south of Harappa, on the banks of the Indus, found similar seals there. The discovery of these seals established the pre-historic character of the two sites. Further detailed excavations were carried out for several seasons and these activities brought to light a sophisticated bronze age civilisation that was a late contemporary of the Egyptian and Sumerian riverine civilisation. These discoveries pushed back the history of the Indian subcontinent to the 3rd millennium B.C.E.

Except for a brief interruption during the second world war and

the partition of the British India into India and Pakistan, the archaeological explorations and excavations have continued almost continuously, both in India and Pakistan, to widen the scope of this bronze age civilisation. As a result of these activities it is now known that at its peak around 2000 B.C.E this civilisation extended from Sutkagen-Dor near the Iran-Pakistan border in the west to Alamgirpur near Delhi in the east and from the foothills of Simla hills in the north to Surat in the south in India and thereafter it suffered a long period of decline culminating in its eclipse round 1700 B.C.E An excellent account of the material and cultural remains of this civilisation is available in the "Birth of Indian Civilisation" by Bridget and Raymond Allchin. Here we shall only deal with the religious aspect of this civilisation and their impact on the evolution of Hinduism.

The archaeological material recovered from all the Harappan sites has revealed some information about the religious practices of the Harappans: they practised *yoga* and observed ritual purity by bathing in sacred tanks, worshipped a Mother Goddess, both in her benign and destructive aspects and the elites amongst them, probably the mercantile classes, observed the precepts of a religion which much later came to be known as Jainism.

The public at large also paid homage to snakes, bulls and trees, *pipal* tree in particular. Their fertility cults involved tantric rites of worshipping the male and female organs of reproduction (*lingam and yoni*). This data clearly establishes that the religious notions of Harappan civilisation did percolate into later Hinduism (as also Buddhism and Jainism) as they continue to be the part and parcel of modern Hinduism at popular level.

However, there are some sectarian scholars, nurtured no doubt in the 19th century culture of Aryan supremacy, who have held to the opinion that the Harappa Civilisation was the work of the Aryans who conquered India and created the Hindu religion and civilisation. This despite the fact that the Rg Veda, the sacred book of the Aryans, shows no familiarity with the lower Indus region which was the heartland of the Harappan civilisation.. This is a proof in itself that they could not have been the authors of Harappa civilisation as claimed by such scholars.

Some critics of this Aryan authorship of the Harappa civilisation

have pointed out that the Aryans were an aniconic people, that is they did not, as per the evidence of Rg Veda, worship images whereas the Harappans were definitely a people who worshipped images of a Goddess and many other sacred objects. And therefore the Aryans could not be associated with this Chalcolithic culture.

The protagonists of the Aryans theory have turned this argument on its ear. They declare that the Rg Vedic Civilisation presents an earlier aniconic phase of the Harappan Civilisation and that the use of " icons in the Indus valley, seen in the phallic cult probably followed in the wake of *Siva* worship in the Rg Veda"[1] As we shall see below, even the earliest village culture in the Indus valley at Mehargarh, which is dated to about 6500 B.C.E, and which was the precursor of Harappa Civilisation, worshipped images of a Mother Goddess.

That means that the Aryans had to be present in the Indus valley even before 6500 B.C.E. This is against all archaeological, linguistic and historical evidence presented in the preceding chapter. However, these scholars have nothing to do with this evidence because their argument is based on emotions rather than any hard evidence. For example, Ramachandran in his presidential address to the 1956 session of the Indian History Congress identified the toy cart found at Mohenjodaro as the vehicle for carrying the *Soma* plant into the sacrificial hall [2].

The Rg Veda is full of ecstatic hymns of praise directed to the mysterious vision evoking plant called *Soma;* and for the past two centuries botanists and Sanskritists have argued over the identity of this sacred narcotic plant. In fact many centuries ago the *Brahmanas*, the priestly commentaries, were already trying to establish from the Vedic hymns just what this *Soma* could possibly be to deserve so much praise. The priestly commentators had evidently lost direct knowledge of *Soma*. And as such we do not know its size, girth, height or weight etc. and whether it required a cart to be carried to the sacrificial alter.

It is only recently that research through the combined efforts of specialists in several fields such as archaeology, linguistics, ethnology and folklore, physiology, ethnobotany, prehistory, plant ecology and philology has been able to establish that *Soma* was a potent hallucinogenic mushroom *amanita muscaria*.[3]. If this be

true then it does not require a cart load of such mushrooms to get a high. Only a handful of them will do the trick for a team of horses. Besides, why not accept the toy cart for what it is - a toy. I have played with such carts in my childhood. There was a Muslim potter in our neighbourhood in the Punjab who used to make such carts and sell them as toys for the children on festive occasions.

As in the case of the toy cart Ramachandran let his imagination take the best of him and identified three headed bull of Harappa seals as the representation of the past, present, and future stages of time. He also identified the rhinoceros unicorns of the said seals as Vedic *Varaha*. Such comparison does not convince and what is worse it attracts derision rather than critical appraisal.

But Ramachandran is not alone in this quest of the *Holy Grail* of Aryan authorship of the Harappa civilisation. He has been joined by S.R.Rao, a prominent icon of Indian archaeology being the discoverer and excavator of Lothal and other Harappan sites. He claims to have deciphered the Harappa script and low and behold he has found it to be Proto-Sanskrit. In other words Harappa civilisation, which was contemporaneous with certain phases of Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisation, was the creation of Indo-Aryans. Mr. Rao has impeccable credentials and I feel a certain amount of trepidation in taking him on but take him on I must because there is much too much evidence against the claim advanced by him.

2. Chronology of Harappa Civilisation

In order to understand the evidence involved, it is of prime importance to first establish the chronology of Harappa civilisation itself. According to available evidence there was trade between Sumer and Indus valley, which was perhaps referred to as Meluhha in the Sumerian records, at very early times. On the basis of this evidence Sir John Marshall had dated the beginning of Harappa civilisation to 3200 B.C.E. However, we know now that those ancient trade contacts were not with Harappa civilisation proper but its predecessor cultures of Kulli and Amri in lower Sindh and Balochistan.

The trade between Sumer and Harappa blossomed only in Sargonid times at the end of 3rd millennium. We know that ships from

Indus valley often tied up at quays of Sumer and Akkad in Sargonid times. There is even a record of an official translator of Meluhhan language stationed in Akkadian empire. Harappan merchants were probably resident at Ur and other Sumerain cities. This was the period of flourishing trade contacts between Sumer and Indus valley. After that we find a decline in such contacts and they came to an end by the 18th century B.C.E. This evidence provides us with a time frame within which we can fit in the beginning and the end of Harappa civilisation: 2400 to 1800 B.C.E. with probable extension on both sides. Late Sir Mortimer Wheeler, former Director General of Archaeology in India and Pakistan, estimated the overall span to 2500-1700 B.C.E.

Radiocarbon dating has, however, tended to lower the above estimate as to its beginning. On the basis of some 30 samples, drawn mainly from Kalibangan, Lothal and Kot Diji, Dr. D.P.Aggarwal of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Bombay, has observed that the total time span would be between 2300 - 1700 B.C.E. It would be useful to mention here that radiocarbon method is not as exact and reliable as it was once thought to be and the archaeologist's faith in it has become a bit less than enthusiastic particularly in its application to the late 3rd and 2nd millennium B.C.E.

Writing in 1968, Wheeler said, "there is in fact both in Egypt and Mesopotamia a tendency for carbon-14 to give an appreciably lower (i.e. later) date during the 3rd and early 2nd millennium B.C. than historical dates based on information cross checked over a wide field." And to explain these disparities he said that, "in about 3rd millennium concentration of radiocarbon in the atmosphere may have differed appreciably due to some disturbance in the solar magnetic field from that of more recent times."[4] He reiterated that the nuclear cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro were a going concern prior to 2500 B.C.E. and they endured in some shape to 1700 B.C.E.

Other scientists also confirmed that the present day measurements of radiocarbon remaining in objects which died round about 2500 B.C.E give a date of 2000 B.C.E.. The shortcomings of carbon dating are now proverbial in the archaeological field. It has become clear that the assumption made by Libby, who developed this technique, that the carbon-14 content in the atmosphere has

always been constant cannot be upheld. The idea that there are definite variations in the amount of carbon 14 in the atmosphere and that these variations are due to the variation in the amount of cosmic rays, which produce carbon 14, entering the earth's magnetic field, was put forth at the Noble Symposium held at Stockholm in 1969 by two Czech scholars , E. Neustupny and V. Bucha. This received confirmation from the work done by Donald C. Grey of the Isotop Geology Laboratory of the University of Utah.[5]

It were the long living pine trees in the White Mountains of California which brought about this change. Wood from these trees can be dated exactly by counting its annual growth rings. By comparing these tree ring dates with carbon-14 dates it was found that the two agreed to within one hundred years up to 650 C.E. but there were marked fluctuations in the periods prior to that date. This suggested that there were changes in the rate of production of carbon-14 in the past.

The scientists have worked out correction factors from the inconsistencies between dendrochronologically dated wood from California's giant sequoias trees and carbon-14 dates. These correction factors grow progressively larger as we go back in time from plus 50 years at 300 B.C.E to plus 650 years at 2700 B.C.E Hans E. Suess of the University of California at San Diego, has devised a method to incorporate correction factors to carbon-14 dates. According to this method in order to calibrate a Carbon-14 date of 2000 B.C. we have to add about 500 years so that the corrected date would then read as 2500 B.C.[6]

Wheeler's original estimate of 2500 to 1700 for the life span of Harappa civilisation therefore stands vindicated. However excavations at Harappa and elsewhere in the recent past (1986-96) have provided a large number of radio- carbon dates which have helped the archaeologists to refine the Harappan chronology. Although excavation at Harappa have revealed that the earliest city might have come into being as early as 2800 B.C.E., the general estimate for the mature Harappan Civilisation now is 2600 - 1900 B.C.E [7]

These excavation have also revealed that a tentative system of writing was evolving, at least at Harappa, as early as 2800 B.C.E

Some of the symbols scratched on the Harappan pottery of that time were later used in the mature Harappan script with which we are so familiar[8]

The script is known from 4000 short inscriptions on seals, pottery, clay impression of seals etc. These inscriptions range from a single character to about 20 characters. There are more than 500 signs but it is not yet clear whether these are ideographic, logographic or anything else. The only sure thing about the script is that it was written from right to left and where there is a second line it starts from the left, i.e., the sequence is boustrophedon.

3. Tall Claims of Deciphering the Harappa Script

Now that we have established the chronology of Harappa culture and the character of its script, let us examine Mr. Rao's claim of translating this enigmatic script into Proto-Sanskrit. I have before me a newspaper clipping from Times of India of September 15th, 1980. Herein Mr. Rao claims that he deciphered the Harappa script on the basis of its resemblance with the North Semitic script of West Asia . This script is known from inscriptions which belong to the 13th-12th centuries B.C.E The ancient Canaanite, Phoenician and Hebrew scripts are derivatives of North Semitic script.

The earliest definitely readable Canaanite inscription is the Ahiram inscription found at Babylos in Phoenicia (now Lebanon) and is probably dated to 12th-11th century B.C. E The most ancient of the Hebrew writing is that of the Gezer calendar of the period of Saul and David and can be dated to 11th century B.C.E The adaptation of North Semitic to Aramaic language took place in the 10th century B.C.E So, the earliest example of North Semitic script does not go back beyond 13th century B.C.E Even if we trace this script back to its earliest roots, i.e., the Gublitic inscriptions of Canaan we cannot go back beyond 1800 B.C.E.

How could Mr. Rao decipher a dead script of circa 2800 B.C. (or even 2600 B.C. that is now believed to be beginning of mature Harappa Civilisation and its script) in terms of a script fashioned thousands of miles away in space and at least a thousand years in the future? As to the Aryans we have seen in the last chapter that by the time Harappa culture took its form the undifferentiated

Indo-Iranians were still living in their original Pontic-Caspian homeland thousands of miles away from Northwest India.

Even if by some magic wand we could transcend the limitations of space and time and bring them closer to the seats of Harappa culture we could not find in them the authors of the Harappa script because these people were illiterate. They have left no record of writing in the vast steppes of Russia or central Asia. For that matter none of the Indo-European peoples were familiar with the art of writing. The Greeks adopted their script from the Minoans, the Romans from the Etruscans and the Hittites from the Assyro-Babylonians, the Iranians adopted Babylonian cuneiform script etc.

The nearest we could bring the Aryans to Harappa culture in time is the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C.E. when the people who could be related to the Rg Vedic people arrived on the ruins of Harappa culture. They could not have contributed anything to the Harappa script and language as they were far removed in time from the beginning of that culture and were illiterate to boot.

In view of all this evidence Mr. Rao's decipherment of Harappa script as a kind of Proto-Sanskrit is geographically, historically and chronologically improbable. It has as much merit as De Hevesy's attempt to read the Harappa script in terms of Rongo script of Easter Islands.

If Mr. Rao and other scholars like him were not so much obsessed with the Aryans they would have noticed that a Dravidian language has a far better claim to be the language of the Harappans than any other. We do not have to perform any intellectual gymnastics to cross the barriers of time and space to bring the speakers of Dravidian tongue closer to the Harappans. Far away from the modern centers of Dravidian speech, some 300,000 people in Balochistan still continue to speak Brahui, a kindred Dravidian language. Since a remote mountainous district may be expected to retain the survivals of ancient races and languages it would appear that the survival of Dravidian speech in the fastness of Baloch hills is an evidence that a Dravidian language was actually flourishing in the western region of the Indian sub-continent long before the arrival of the Indo-Aryans.

We have now to trace the origins of this Dravidian speech. It may be stated at the outset that the presence of Dravidian speech in the northwest of the subcontinent was not the result of movement of the Dravidian speakers from south India to northwest. The Dravidian speakers are not autochthonous in south India. Had it been so they would first have colonized Shri Lanka which is right on their door steps and to date preponderantly remains Indo-Aryan in speech. The movement of the Dravidian speaking Tamils into that island nation is the subject of recent history.

4. The Dravidian Features of Harappa Civilisation West Asian Origin

As late Prof. H.D Sankalia wrote, according to the present evidence the main elements of civilisation came to India from west Asia, in particular that area which is now known as Iran.[9] Citing the commonality between the pottery styles of village cultures of Balochistan, Iran and Turkmanistan Stuart Piggot has suggested that the pre-urban culture of Balochistan villages is an extension eastward of the related cultures from Caspian sea to the borderlands of the Indian sub-continent [10]. We have therefore to look westward to Iran in our quest for origins of the language and script of the Harappans along with some other salient features of their civilisation.

Despite the pious and earnest efforts of a section of the Indian scholars to deny all foreign influences in shaping the history of Indian civilisation and claiming for it an astonishingly long and glorious past, it was not in India that humankind took steps towards a more civilised state of life based on the discovery of agriculture. For countless thousands of years the Indian man eked out a bare existence as hunter, fisher and gatherer. We have yet to find a site in India showing gradual transition from this state to agriculture.

This transition is recorded only in the region which is called the Fertile Crescent and extends in an arc from the east coast of the Mediterranean from Palestine to Iran. The raw materials for the risky leap to agriculture were very unevenly distributed in the prehistoric world. We learn from Prof. Jerod Diamond [11] that of the world's thousands of grass species only 56 produce enough seeds to be good candidates for domestication as cereals. Of these

varieties as many as 32, including ancient varieties of wheat and barley, were found is in this area .

Other areas of the world were not so lucky. South America had two, North America and Southern Africa each had one, Australia and New Guinea had none. The Fertile Crescent was similarly blessed with a number of animal candidates for domestication. All of the wild ancestors of the world's most domestic animals - sheep, goat, cow, ass and pig - originated in this area. None of these was native to the aforementioned areas of the ancient world. Such archaeological sites as Jericho, Hassuna, Jarmo, Catal Huyuk, Sialk and so on in Palestine, Turkey, Syria and Iran are much older than anything found in India.

The Fertile Crescent had three important zones each of which may have given rise to the spread of shared varieties of grain, domesticated animals and techniques of fashioning artefacts, such as tools and pottery, to the other parts of the world. One zone was centred on Jericho from where this Neolithic revolution may have spread to the Arabian peninsula, Egypt and the rest of north Africa. From the zone centred on Catal Huyuk in Anatolia (modern Turkey) it may have been diffused to Europe. The third zone was in the Zagros mountains and centred on Ali Kosh (8000 - 6500 B.C.E) in western Iran. From here the Neolithic economy spread Northeast to southern Turkmanistan , Southwest into lower Mesopotamia and Southeast via Iran/ Elam to Balochistan in the Indian subcontinent.

In the early stages of Neolithic (8000 -6000 B.C.E) this whole area formed one large cultural unit and was marked by common elements of economy such as cultivation of wheat, barley and herding of goats, sheep and cattle, a Goddess centred religion and a common language which is called by scholars as "Proto-Elamo-Dravidian". The cultural unity over this wide area continued till the beginning of urbanisation in Turkmanistan, Elam and the Indus valley when it was sundered because of the localisation of culture (5000 - 2600 B.C.E) brought about by environmental, geographical, cultural and historical factors

If one looks at the map of the Indian sub-continent, one would notice that the region immediately to the west of Balochistan is what the ancients called Elam. The importance of Elam in the

rise of civilisation in the Indus valley has long been underestimated. Possibly by 7000 B.C.E. Elam was developing a Neolithic economy based on the cultivation of wheat, barley and lentils, domestication of animals and making mud-brick houses, pottery and grind stones.

It was from Elam that the movement of people and influences radiated to the east. As the evidence from Mehargarh, at the foot of the Bolan pass, shows farming had reached Baluchistan by the 6500 B.C.E. There is no doubt that small communities of food gatherers of indigenous stock were already there and that wild varieties of at least one cereal crop, barley, was also available, there is no evidence of local domestication of plants and live stock. It comes only after the Neolithic revolution had taken roots on the subcontinent that the local fauna and flora such as water buffalo, elephant and cotton, barley and certain leguminous plants etc were domesticated. It would therefore appear that the spread of farming skills and the biological continuity of live stock and grains did involve the movement of people and ideas from Elam.

The findings at the lowest levels of Mehargarh confirm their connection with excavated sites in Elam, Turkmanistan and Afghanistan. Prior to the establishment of the first Indus cities there were many such settled village communities in the mountains and valleys of Balochistan and Sindh whose cultural and material ties were with the land of Elam. They are represented by such pre-Harappan cultural sites as Amri,. Kot Diji, pre-Harappan Kalibangan etc. It was the interaction between such village communities, strung together by a loose web of commerce, that gave rise first to Amri culture, which became fully developed along the lower Indus at the end of fourth millennium B.C.E., and then to the cities and towns of Harappa civilisation and the spread of the Neolithic revolution to Saurashtra and to the rest of India. We have therefore to look towards Elam for the solution of Harappan enigma.

The plains of Susiana were just an extension of Mesopotamia and enjoyed similar environmental and physical advantages for the creation of civilisation. Sumer in southern Mesopotamia achieved urbanisation around 3500 B.C.E. By 3200 B.C.E civilisation of Elam with a highland capital at Anshan, near what was to later become Persepolis, and a lowland capital at Susa was established.

The kingdom of Elam together with Sumer in Mesopotamia were in fact the earliest civilisations in west Asia during the 4th millennium B.C.E. Of the two kingdoms Elam was more fortunate in having a number of natural resources such as wood, stone, minerals and metal ores in the hills and mountains of their homeland.

Sumer, and for that matter most of Mesopotamia, was starved of such resources. In fact the development of civilisation in the valleys of the twin rivers depended on the availability of the goods from Elam. That would explain the constant attempts to conquer Elam by the Sumerians, the Akkadians and the Assyrians. Recent excavations carried out by Lamberg-Karlovsky at Tepe Yahia [12] show an astonishingly highly developed Elamite culture in what is now south-eastern Iran between 4500 and 3300 B.C.E. Thus a proto-Elamite culture flourished some 200-400 years before the oldest Indus valley culture, the Amri culture, in centres only 500 miles away from the later high civilisation of Harappa, that is, midway between Tigris and the Indus or a bare couple of hundred miles from the modern borders of Balochistan.

Other sites in Iran where the Elamites imposed themselves on the local cultures were Tal-i-Malyan, Tepe Sialk and Tal-i-Ghazir on the Iranian plateau The Elamites were therefore widespread in Iran to make it entirely their culture zone.

By the 3rd millennium B.C.E Elam had extended its influence eastward along a trade route which passed through Tepe Yahya as far as Nal village culture of southern Balochistan. The record of occupation at Tepe Yahya begins with a 6500 years old Neolithic village and ends during the Sassanian rule. Excavations show that the inhabitants of Tepe Yahia used sun dried mud bricks for building houses as far back as 4500 B.C.E. They used pottery with a smooth slip-finished surface, red in colour with decorations painted in black. They practised fractional burials of their dead and made terra-cotta figurines of a Mother Goddess.

Somewhere at the beginning of 4th millennium B.C.E. signs of important cultural changes appear in north and central Balochistan. They consist of painted pottery, traces of houses, ornaments, terra-cotta figurines, which have since been identified as those of a Mother Goddess, and fractional burials. Many of the

designs on painted pottery from pre-Harappan sites at kot Diji and Kalibangan show close similarity to the wares of eastern Iran or Elam. Thus while the farming villages and towns of Elam such as Tepe Yahya, Shar-i-Sokhta, Tal-i-Ablis, Bampur and Shahdad gave impetus to the rise of village communities in Balochistan and Sindh such as Nal, Kulli, Amri, Kot Dijji and Shah-i-Tump, these Indic communities in turn made their contribution to the development of urban culture of Mohenjodaro and Chanhudaro on the Indus and Harappa on the Ravi, a tributary of the Indus in the Punjab.

The Elamites were a people of unknown origin. Their language, till very recently, was not clearly understood. Many attempts were made in the past to connect this language with other families of languages such as Scythian and Ural-Altaic but all these attempts ended in failure. Till recently it was generally thought that Elamite had no ancient relatives or modern descendants. This all is in the past now. Prof. David E. McAlpin, a noted linguist of the University of London, by marshalling incontrovertible evidence has since proved that the Elamite and Dravidian languages are truly cognate and were derived from a common proto-language which he terms as "Proto-Elamo-Dravidian".

At present the scholarly opinion holds that in the entire region from Zagros mountains in the west to Afghanistan-Balochstan in the east and from southern Turkmanistan in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south the spoken language was Proto-Elamo-Dravidian The methodology employed by McAlpin is the age old trusted philology based comparative linguistics. He has demonstrated systematic correlations in phonology, lexicon and morphology for which cognition between the two language groups is the only possible explanation.

He has convincingly demonstrated that "Proto-Elamo-Dravidian" has a root structure similar to the "Proto-Dravidian» and that the syntax between the two agree on a number of basic principles. According to McAlpin "the massiveness of the data and high percentage of correspondences [between Proto-Elamo-Dravidian and Proto-Dravidian] is on the whole very secure and to clearly disapprove this genetic hypothesis it would have to be shown that almost 90% of the resemblances are due to other reasons [than cognition between the two languages]. Inspite of any possible

weakness in individual etyma this does not seem likely at all."[13]

At the oldest level of reconstruction of Brahui or Elamite cognates, Proto-Dravidian has a number of common words for animals and animal husbandry: cattle, goat/sheep, milk, watch, tend, herd. There are many other words for animals such as rabbits, wolf, jackal, wild horse or onagar and scorpion, etc. which are common in these languages. Similarly several agricultural terms are cognate in the two languages. These are "to plow" (*Uru*), "threshing floor" (*Kalam*), "reap" (*koy*), "field" (*Vayal*) and others too numerous to list.

The most interesting and significant cognate between Elamite and Proto-Dravidian is the word for brick - *Upat*. The brick was so ubiquitous in Harappa civilisation whereas the Aryans, as stated earlier, had no word for it. According to McAlpin the lexicon of "Proto-Elamo-Dravidian" for such words as *Um* for threshing grains, *Atas* for store room and *Cip* for door suggests that the unified Elamo-Dravidian people had shared in a common Neolithic village farming culture. He has suggested that this unified culture broke up round about 6000 B.C.E.

This fits in well with the archaeological findings that farming reached the hills of Balochistan, Mehargarh in particular, about that time. The people who were involved in this movement must have been the speakers of the Brahui language. This language, which is traditionally assigned to the Northern Dravidian language group is, as it should be, linguistically and geographically intermediate between "Proto-Elamo-Dravidian" and "Proto-Dravidian". It appears that this language was the first to break off the parent stem. It could be termed as "Braho-Dravidian" which on reaching the plains of the Indus and the Punjab developed into "Proto-Dravidian". The split between Brahui and the "Proto-Dravidian" may have occurred during the immigration of people from Baluch hills to the Indus valley in the 4th millennium B.C.E. It now seems clear that the Dravidian speakers who were in and around the Indus valley must have been the authors of Harappa culture.

Prof. Collin Renfrew had recently suggested in his book "Archaeology and Language: The puzzle of Indo-European Origins" that Indus valley civilization was Indo-Aryan and that it were the

Indo-Aryans who introduced farming economy to this region. But in view of the evidence marshaled by McAlpin even he has changed his mind. Regarding the spread of farming to the Indian sub-continent he said in 1989 i.e., only a year after the publication of his own aforementioned book, that "In this connection it is interesting that linguist David McAlpin of the University of London has recently shown that Elamite, a language known to have been spoken in the ancient kingdom of Elam (now part of Khuzistan in south-western Iran) is related to the Dravidian languages of India. It may be that the south-western wave of advance carried the ancestors of Elamite and Dravidian languages across to Pakistan and India. Later the Proto-Dravidian tongue would have been displaced by the Indo-European languages that are now spoken in India". [14]

A recent gene study, undertaken by Ms. Shama Barnabas of the National Chemical Laboratory at Pune, India, shows that the Dravidian speakers originated in the neighbourhood of Iran -Iraq. While presenting her findings to the National Science Academy at New Delhi, Ms Barnbas said that her findings were based on the analysis of 29 mitochondria genes identified in blood samples of 100 individuals belonging to 14 language groups in North, South and Central regions of India. The mitochondria genes are used by scientists as markers to trace human evolution. According to Ms Barnabas' findings the south Indian Dravidians could be the descendants of the first Caucasians migrants from the Zagros region of Iran-Iraq.

The people of that region were, according to Ms. Barnbas, known to *speak a language called Elamite which was close to the Dravidian languages of India* (italics added). The second wave of Caucasian migrants brought the speakers of Aryan languages to India. According to Ms. Barnabas the close relationship of Indians with Caucasians was established by the presence of as many as 12 Caucasian gene types among the total of 29 identified in Indians. In contrast Indians shared only four gene types with the East Asians.[15]

Lets us now look into the possible origin of the Harappan script. The second half of 4th millennium B.C.E. is of great importance to the history of mankind because towards its end came the invention of writing. It evolved independently and simultaneously

in Elam and Sumer. The two scripts were essentially pictographic but in time whereas the Sumerian script evolved into the well known cuneiform script, the Elamite retained its pictographic character for quite sometime.

Written tablets made of clay recovered from lower level of the Tepe Yahia mound have been shown by carbon-14 analysis to date back to 3500 B.C.E. The script is pictographic and is called "proto-Elamite". It probably contained barely more than basic logograms but they could be combined with others in many ways. From this purely pictographic there evolved a syllabic script which contained only scattered examples of pictographs and developed by a process of simplification into a linear script by the middle of the 3rd millennium B.C.E.. Unfortunately this script died around 2220 B.C.E.

McAlpin has suggested that before this script went out of use it gave birth to a derivative script which is the Harappa script. According to him there is so much similarity between "proto-Elamite" and the script of the Indus valley that the later could be assumed to have its origin in the former. The similarity between the proto-Elamite and Harappan script suggests that the art of writing was transferred from Elam to the Indus valley. Recently Prof. Fairservis is said to have attempted a transcription from the proto-Elamite into Harappan script.

For example, based on a repeat appearance of a "capped knot" sign on a number of seals he has read the said sign as the chief of the settlement site of Alladino as *URTAL*[16]. As in the case of farming and other paraphernalia of civilisation the script too must have travelled by the well known trade routes from eastern Elam to Indus valley. Soap stone, so extensively used by the Harappans to carve their seals, was imported by them from Tepe-Yahia.

5. The Elamite Impact on Harappan Society & Religion

Apart from the language and the script there are certain other motifs and objects of religious import in the West Asian region east of Zagros, and Elamite culture in particular, of which we find an echo in Dravidian/Harappan culture. The most important and significant religious feature of this region is the worship of female powers or goddesses. The rationale behind the worship of

female powers would be discussed in the next chapter but here we suffice to say that archaeological discoveries in Turkmanistan, Elam and Indus valley have turned up clay and terra-cotta goddess figurines with elaborate coiffeurs and male animals mostly rams and bulls who were the objects of worship.

Turkmanistan village sites show four millennia of such worship. Pre-urban sites at Persepolis and Susa in Elam reveal a familiar pattern of Goddess worship. Evidence from Mehargarh, the oldest known continuous settlement in the subcontinent, also shows that Goddess worship was an integral part of pre-urban Indian village culture.

Although Elamite religion had many traits common to the customs of the neighbouring Sumer, it retained its individuality. This individuality consisted in an exalted position and high respect and honour accorded to woman in their society. The pride of place in the pantheon of Elamite deities was occupied by a goddess *Pinikir* who was worshipped as the mistress of heaven and earth. She was the Great Mother of gods.

This great Mother Goddess had yet another name *Kiririsha* and was also known as *Parti.* She was venerated as giver of life, death and disease. In 1958-59 Ghirshman excavated a large Elamite site at Tchoga-Zanbil where he found a temple of *Pinkir* the Great Mother Goddess of fertility and procreation. Here he found a great number of eyes made of stone, shell and bitumen symbolising the all seeing omnipotence of the goddess. This mode of omnipotence was ultimately derived from Mesopotamia where at Tell Brak in the Khabur valley figures with eyes delineated have been found in large numbers at a temple site excavated by Prof. Mallowan.. They no doubt represent a female divinity as the temple was dedicated to the Mesopotamian Mother-goddess *Inanna-Ishtar*.

Countless clay figurines of a naked goddess holding her breasts with both hands have been found in Elam. Similar figurines have been found in the Baloch hills and the valley of the Indus and the Punjab.. It appears that the position of this Great Mother was taken over by male gods sometime in the 2nd millennium B.C.E. Although she lost her pre-eminence to the male gods, she was never excluded from the elite of the Elamite pantheon. As we shall see below the Harappans were in the main worshippers of such a

female deity.

Another interesting feature of Elamite religion was that worship in their temples was accompanied by music and other ceremonies suggestive of *puja*. This mode of worship must have spread from Sumer and passed on to the valley of the Indus. As Joseph Campbell has said, "There can be no doubt that in the royal cattle barns of the goddess Ninhursag of Obeid and Inanna of Kafajah, a full millennium and a half before the first signs of any agrarian-pastoral civilisation eastwards of Iran, we have prelude to the great ritual symphony of bells, waved lights, prayers, hymns and lowing sacrificial kine that has gone up to the goddess in India throughout the ages."[17]

It appears from the Elamite seals that in the early days of Elam the deity appears to have been worshipped by female clergy. These handmaidens of the Goddess were those who had dedicated their entire lives to Her service[18]. This reminds one of the *Devadassi* system which till recently was of special importance to the worship of the deity in Dravidian temples of south India. Another Elamite seal shows a goddess being carried in a chariot in a procession flanked by her attendants and devotees. Elamite reliefs also depict long lines of worshippers in procession.

Such ritual processions and pilgrimages to sacred sites were an important feature of Elamite religion. So are the processions associated with *Durga, Ganpati and Jagannanth* and various other divinities of Hindu India to day and must have been a part of the Harrappa civilisation. The snake, which from times immemorial has been a symbol of the Great Mother, appears to have been a true leitmotif of Elamite civilisation and received wide spread reverence. An Elamite seal dating to about 3000 B.C.E. shows priests wearing belts or girdles of snakes around their waists.

The chief male god of the Elamites, *Humban* who replaced *Kiririsha,* was a snake god. The snake appears on quite a few seals of the Harappans and it must have been an object of worship and reverence amongst them as it continues to be so in the modern Hinduism. An annual festival of *Nagapanchmi* in the Hindu calendar is devoted to its worship Androgamy was yet another shared religious concept between Elamites and the Harappans. An Elamite cylinder seal depicts androgynous figures in the

company of a goddess and various animals and trees. An Harappan seal likewise portrays a line of androgynously dressed worshippers standing before a goddess in a tree and wearing a buffalo-horned crown. This concept later played a significant part in the mythology of *Siva.*

Urbanisation in Turkmanistan and Elam gave rise to a dramatic new religious form. It was the building of massive brick platform rising from the ground in tiered steps for ritual purposes. One such 40 feet high platform was discovered at Altin in Turkmanistan. In Susa, the capital of Elamite kingdom, the temples to the gods were built on an elevated sacred platform on the western edge of the city. A similar massive ritual platform of bricks faced with plaster was found at Mehargarh. Elsewhere in Balochistan similar structure are found which are related to Kuli culture.

Such structures of sacred nature were set apart from the village sites. This tradition was continued in the building of Mohanjodaro, Harappa and Kalibangan. At each site the cities were divided into two basic components: a lower city where the citizens lived and carried on their daily secular affairs and an upper area on each city's western side formed by a high brick walled platforms. These platforms were a continuation of the aforementioned structures of the pre-urban village sites in Turkmanistan, Elam and Balochistan but on a much grander scale.

At Mohenjodaro, which apparently was the religious capital of the Harappa civilisation, the surface area of the platform in question was large enough to accommodate several buildings including a large ceremonial bathing tank with its ancillary structures, a college of priests and an assembly hall, along with other buildings meant for ceremonies. The existence of this ceremonial bath together with the provision of bathrooms and drains in the residential buildings in the lower city testify to the fact that the ideas of pollution and ritual purity were a part of the Harappan religion as it remains so in the Hinduism of to-day.

Another interesting structure on the said platform is the great granary which housed the wealth of the state - the surplus agricultural produce of the empire's hinterland. An important facet of Elamite civilisation appears to be granaries too which are shown

on their square seals. One such seal shows a granary made of mud brick surmounted by a long series of domes. The exterior is provided with a row of ventilation holes. Workers are depicted as bringing grains in sacks and jars reaching the domes by ladders or the steps built on the side. The granaries are built on a terraced foundation to raise them above ground level. Scribes sit near the granaries to record on their clay tablets each bushel of corn delivered [19].

The excavation at Tepe Yahia show the existence of such granaries which were filled from the top. These sacred platforms in the Harappan cities were therefore the seats of power, both religious and secular, of the rulers of the Harappan empire.

Apart from the religious motifs the Harappan society appears to have been influenced by the social structures of the Elamites. The Elamites were a matrilineal society. The possible origin of such societies will be discussed in the next chapter. In such societies not only the godhead was a woman, but it was she who also directed the secular affairs of the tribe and the family succession was through her and not through the male line. We have already mentioned above that their pre-eminent deity was a female. The sovereignty amongst them was hereditary through women in that the new ruler was invariably the "son of a sister" of the preceding sovereign.

This is a well known custom amongst the Dravidians in south India. The most important figure of the Eparti dynasty of 18th century B.C.E. Elam was the daughter of the founder of that dynasty. Her name is not known but she is known to history as *Silhaha's* sister, *Silhaha* being the son of the founder. The later Eprati were not considered true heirs to the throne unless they could trace their descent through this lady who was known as *Amma Hashuk*, the Gracious Mother. *Amma*, it may be noted, is a word for mother common to all present day Dravidian languages. Incidentally the killing of *Kansa* of Mathura by *Krishna* in later Hindu mythology is in line with the succession in a matrilineal society such as Elam and the Dravidians - *Krishna*, who succeeded *Kansa* as the king of Mathura was after all *Kansa's* "sister's son", and is considered by many scholars to be of Dravidian rather than Aryan origin.

A recent genetic study from a cemetery in Harappa has suggested that the women were buried near their mothers and grand mothers. Men buried near them did not seem to be related to them. These men were probably buried with their wives' families [20] This again shows a matrilineal character of the Harappan society surviving in the present day Dravidian South Indian societies.

From the evidence presented above it would appear that the religion of the Harappans followed the same Elamo-Dravidian pattern. As Hopkins & Hiltebeitel have said, "The similarities between Indus urban culture and other western Asian cultures, however, were general family resemblences, like those between Elamite and Dravidian language systems. Indus urban culture was both unique and uniquely Indian, as much a product of the regional setting as of common western Asian heritage with characteristics deeply rooted in the pre-urban cultures of Balochistan and Afghanistan" [21]. There is no doubt that cereal agriculture together with technological advance and religious motifs were diffused from the west but then were most definitely Indianised. As one scholar has observed." This may be just another instance of the frequently observed phenomenon in India of accepting a novel idea with alacrity and altering it in style and content so fundamentally that it becomes completely incorporated into the enduring greater Indian tradition and traces of its alien origin are all obliterated" [22]. Commenting upon the village cultures of Balochistan, Piggot has observed that although these cultures had in all probability received their stimuli from the Irano-Turkmanistan region, "the essentially Indian character of Indian pre-history, so marked in many features of its more mature development, is hinted at here from the very start."[23] Same thing was destined to happen again centuries later to the Iranian and Roman influences which gave rise to the glories of Mauryan and Gupta ages respectively.

6. Proto-Dravidian - The Harappan Language

There are a number of highly regarded scholars such as Piero Meriggi, Yuri Knorozov, Iravatham Mahadevan, F.C.Southworth, Walter A. Fairservice and Asko Parpola who are of the opinion that a form of Proto-Dravidian was a dominant language of the Harappa civilisation and that the speakers of this language must have been wide spread throughout northern India This is clear

from the fact that a number of features of Dravidian language appear in the Rg Veda, the earliest known Indo-Aryan literary work, almost right from the beginning of its composition. This process could have started while the Indo-Aryans were still in occupation of Iran which was Elamite in culture and Proto-Elamo-Dravidian in language. Such borrowings became more numerous in later Sanskrit when the Aryans settled down in the Indo-Gengetic plain, in Prakrits or early Indo-Aryan dialects, and the modern Indian vernaculars derived therefrom.

It is interesting to note that whereas the Dravidian languages show extensive lexical borrowings but only a few traits of structural (phonological and grammatical) borrowings from the Indo-Aryan tongues, the latter show a large scale structural borrowings from the Dravidian tongues but only a few loan words. The Dravidian population of north India was partly assimilated and partly pushed to the south by the Aryans. This process of assimilation and replacement of the Dravidian tongues by Aryan tongues was entirely completed before the beginning of the current era after a bilinguals that must have lasted many centuries.

The pattern of distribution of the present day Dravidian languages in India, and recent archaeological finds in Kutch, support the concept of a fairly recent expansions of these languages into peninsular India via Kuch and Gujarat. The Dravidians are said to have reached their present habitats about the 16th century B.C.E. Prior to their arrival in that region, south India was, since post glacial period, occupied by primitive people as detailed below. While the Aryans were Aryanising the north, the Dravidians were busy imposing their language and culture on these primitive people. The present population of south India is the result of this symbioses.

The speakers of "Proto-Elamo-Dravidian" or to be more precise, "Braho-Dravidian," did not land in a vacuum in India which in fact has been a home of diverse kinds of people at least from the middle Pleistocene (400,000 to 100,000 years ago). The first people to inhabit India towards the close of the Ice Age were a dark-skinned, short statured, broad nosed and curly to wavy haired people akin to the Negroid of Africa and Melanesia who have been designated by ethnologists as Negritos or "little Negroes". The remnants of these Negritos still live in the Malaya peninsula and

are called Semang. In the Philippines they are known as Aeta and as Minikopi on the Andaman islands. Unfortunately we know nothing about physical aspects of this early man in India as no skeletal remains of have so far been found.

It is said that a human skull belonging to this period was found in 1881 in a river bed but it was subsequently lost in the museum of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The Negritos made "pebble tools".with distinct African affinities, and are said to have moved from Africa into India at an undetermined time in the dim past. It appears that they came to India via land route following the coast line of Arabian peninsula, Persian Gulf and Iran.

The next race to overrun India after the Ice Age was a long haired, bearded and still very primitive tribes. These were the Veddas. To this stock belonged the Sakai of Malaya, Veddoid aborigines of Shri Lanka, natives of Australia and numerous native tribes of India itself such as Irulas and Panyars of Wynaad. They seemed to be very closely related to the European Ice Age people. The Veddas must have lived in prehistoric times in East Africa, Mesopotamia and Persia. Carlton Coon discovered a pocket of Veddids in Hadhramaut on southern coast of Arabia and another in the swamps of Helmand river in Afghanistan. They form a prehistoric bridge between Europe and India just as the Negritos formed a bridge between Africa and India.

It is from the intermingling of the two races of antiquity - the long established Negritos and the immigrant Veddas - that there gradually arose in India a dark skinned, wavy haired and slightly built mixed race that we encounter even at the present times in forests of interior India. In the Neolithic age the picture changed again. This time there were Micro-Polynesian migrations from the islands of Indian Archipelago, Burma, Malaya and Indo-China which brought the people speaking Mundari languages belonging to Austroasiatic linguistic group to India. They made "choppers" tools with distinct east Asian affinities.

The Mundari speakers brought their own civilisation with them, erected megalithic monuments and underground burial chambers and worshipped nature deities which were later taken over by the Harappans and through them by the Hindu religion. They spread all over India and seem to have absorbed almost completely the

Negrito and Vedda populations. James Hornell has demonstrated a strong Munda influence on the pre-Dravidian people of south India. Jean Przyluski has shown that they were wide spread in the Punjab. The district of Ambala perhaps derives its name from one of their tribes *Udumbara* who resided in that area. The territorial names such as *Anga, Vanga, Kalinga and of river Ganga* have been attributed to these Mundari speakers. Skeletal remains from Harappan sites show a preponderance of Asustroasiatic types.

Even to this day this type seems to represent the most numerous and most primitive elements in the aborigines of India. Their presence in Balochistan in prehistoric times perhaps led to the naming of that region as Gedrosia - the country of the dark folks. They were still at the food gathering stage when the people of "Mediterranean" type, which everywhere in west Asia is associated with earliest agricultural settlements, brought the agricultural civilisation from Elam. The "Mediterranean" type forms the second largest group amongst the skeletal remains and forms a dominant element in the population of north India.

By the middle of the 4th millennium B.C.E. the riverine valleys of Sindh and Punjab were dotted with small self sufficient agricultural villages each with its own style of pottery but sharing a common standard of living and technology. It was in this milieu that the newcomers developed their "Braho-Dravidian" language into "Proto-Dravidian" and absorbed the cultural and spiritual elements of the Australoid aborigines, the proto-Indians, into their own culture and created a uniquely Indian culture of the Harappa Civilisation round about 2800 B.C.E.

The Harappans, in the manner of the Elamites, had a tendency to portray imaginary hybrid and bizarre animals such as a bull with three heads or a chimera with parts of body belonging to different animals, and in a few cases, to humans. Kosambi has suggested that this kind of iconography was also common to Sumer and Elam and possibly depicted the merger of different totemic clans into one.[24] The Harappan seal could therefore be interpreted as coming together of the village communities to form one uniform culture.

The question now is who provided the incentive and leadership for these small isolated village communities to come together and

form a unified state which has been termed by Wheeler as the "vastest political experiment before the advent of the Roman Empire"? The late Prof. S.K.Chatterji while describing the character of the Austrics had said that they were generally passive rather than aggressive, credulous rather than questioning, superstitious, gregarious and fond of company. It was the malleability of the Austric temper and their easy going ways, Chatterji had argued, that possibly gave to the more energetic Dravidians, and later the Aryans, their chance to push ahead and leave the Austrics in the backwaters of Indian society despite the fact that, as we shall see below, their contribution to basal Hinduism had been considerable.[25]

According to Chatterji the remains of the magnificent city civilisation of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, with an advanced system of writing, could possibly be ascribed to the Dravidians [26]. The Dravidians had brought with them the crafts of metal working, of house building and a new language with a script. They were thus the creators of civilisation as were the Sumerians in Iraq and the Elamites in Southern Iran. Being the culturally dominant element in the mixed population, they must have swamped the Mundari speakers both culturally and linguistically and thus making the whole of north western India a Dravidian speaking area before the advent of the Indo-Aryans. The above discussion, it is hoped, makes this point clear without depending on a forced analogy of a north Semitic script or a subjective feeling of a mind obsessed with the 19th century Aryan myth.

The Harappan religious beliefs and practices reflect the influence of two general cultural traditions that mingled and mixed in varying degrees to create an uniquely Indian tradition which set it apart from other civilisations of antiquity such as Elam, Sumer and Turkmanistan. These traditions are those of the agrarian cultures and food gathering communities. Of these two the most stable traditions belong to the Dravidians who brought agriculture to the subcontinent from west Asia. These traditions are typified by their development of writing and other instruments of civilisation. They display a pervasive consciousness of the earth and its vegetation linked to the cycles of time and the great round of the seasons related to the its fecundity.

The fundamental energy that gave rise to the earthly fertility was

regarded by them as feminine symbolised by a Cosmic or Mother Goddess. As we have already seen that the dominant deity of the Harappan was a Goddess. Archaeological excavations have not yet revealed the remains of any monumental temples to this Goddess and it is unlikely that we will ever find them. There could be two reasons for the absence of such temples. First, (as we shall discuss later) the economic surplus was too meagre to allow the undertaking of any monumental works. Secondly, the Goddess worship was almost certainly a domestic affairs as evidence from Harappan and pre-Harappan sites indicates that special niches were set aside in each household to install a goddess figurine. It is interesting to note that even to-day most important rites of Hinduism are performed at home. Major religious activities such as bathing in sacred tanks and perhaps an occasional blood sacrifice were, in the manner of Elam and Turkmanistan, performed on the sacred platforms outside the city

The second stream of culture came from the archaic food gatherers such as the Mundari speaking Austrics. They too experienced the potency and power of nature and developed various magical and sacerdotal means including, as we shall see below, *Yoga,* to please or combat these intensely felt unseen powers. They also revered the earth but did not believe in wounding her breast with a plough. They felt kinship with the earth and paid reverence to its creations such as trees, wild plants and animals. The numinous, in the manner of agriculturists, was viewed by them as feminine but of demonic appearance and associated with death, birth and disease..

These are the dreaded *Matrikas* such as *Kali, Chandika, Mariyama, Mansa and Seetla* and many others who occasionally demanded blood sacrifices. The Asustrics perhaps more than the agriculturists, viewed fecundity of nature in terms of male and female sexual union. That accounts for the large quantities of *lingam-yoni* stones found in the Harappan ruins. The religious sensibilities and practices of the Harappans lie deep within the religious practices and ideologies of rural India even to this day.

From these humble beginnings, the Harappans in time developed rudiments of the philosophical concepts such as *Tantrism, Sankhya -Yoga and proto-Jainism* which were later to develop into magnificent mansions of thought to completely overwhelm the Vedic religion. As Hiltebeitel has said, "there are good reason to

believe that a largely unknown quantity, the religion of the peoples of the Indus valley, is an important source for determining the roots of Hinduism."[27]. We shall in the next few chapter discuss salient feature of these early religious concepts.

References

1. The Vedic Age - Bharatya Vidya Bhavan - Bombay 1988 - p.198.
2. The Culural Heritage of India - Calcutta 1958 - Vol.1 preface p. xlvii & footnote.
3. R.Gordon Wasson - Soma - The Divine Mushroom of Immortality - New York
4. Mortimer Wheeler - The Indus Civilization - Cambridge University Press 1968 - p.121.
5. David Wilso - Science & Archaeology - Penguin Books, England, 1975 p.112-13.
6. Colin Renfrew - Carbon 14 and Prehistory of Europe - Old World Archaeology- Scientific American 1972 - p.201-209.
7. Jonathan M.Kenoyer - Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley - American Institute of Pakistan Studies 1998 - p.49.
8. Jonathan M. Kenoyer - ibid - p.69.
9. H.D.Sankalia - Pre-history of India - New Delhi 1977. See chapter 3.
10. Stuart Piggott - Prehistoric Societies - Penguin Books, England, 1970 - p.190.
11. Jarod Diamond - Guns, Germs and Steel - New York 1997.
12. Lamberg -Karlovsky - An Early City in Iran - Scientific American opp.cit.
13. David McAlpin - Proto-Elamo-Dravidian And its Implications - American Philosophical Society Philadelphia 1987 p.93.
14. Colin Renfrew - The Origin of Indo-European Language - Scientific American 1989.
15. Report in India Abroad of March 21st,1997 - New York.

16. Walter A. Fairservis - Allahdino: An Excavation of Small Harappa site - Possehl Edition of Harappa Civilization 1993 p.111.

17. Joseph Campbell - Masks of God - Oriental Mythology - New York 1970 - p.39.

18. Walther Hinz - The Lost world of Elam - New York University Press 1973 - p.63 .

19. Walther Hinz - ibid - p. 24.

20. Shanti Menon - Indus Valley Inc.- Discover Magazine December 1998

21. Hopkins & Hiltebeitel - Encyclopedia of Religion- Gen. Editor Mircea Eliade- p.218 22:

22. Gordon T. Bowles - The Peoples of Asia - New York 1977 - p.133.

23. Stuart Piggott opp. cit. p. 191.

24. D.D.Kosambi - Myth & Reality - Bombay 1992 - p.9.

25. S,K,Chatterji - Contributions from Different Language-Culture Groups - The Cultural Heritage of India- -Calcutta 1958. p.78-79.

26. S,K,Chatterji - opp.cit. p.81.

27. Alf Hiltebeitel - opp.cit. Vol.VI. p.336

The Great Mother The Source of it all

3

1. Our Pre-Historic Religious Beliefs

If standing erect and walking on one's two feet could be taken as the sole criterion of being human then it could be said that the human family evolved some five million years ago. But it was nothing more than an ape like species which took millions of years to evolve into what we are to-day.

It is impossible to say whether in that long twilight of evolution, particularly in the last million years or so when our ancestors mastered the fire, took to tool making and made hunting a part of their existence, they had any human-like self awareness or even a modicum of consciousness to reach outside of themselves and conceive of an impersonal force or forces which animated this world such as the cycles of seasons, the appearance of buds and leaves on the limbs of trees and of the fruits, vegetables and other edible roots springing from the bosom of the dark earth.

From the evidence of Neanderthal burials where the dead were laid in graves containing powdered red ochre and often accompanied by their personal tools and other paraphernalia, it would appear that primitive mankind, some seventy thousand years ago, had some vague idea of life beyond death The red ochre was symbolic of blood so that if the dead were to live again it would provide them with vigour. But a belief in life after death does not necessarily presage a belief in and worship of a deity or deities who were responsible for the whole phenomenon of birth, death and rebirth. The life of primitive humankind was chiefly a physical matter. Their basic needs were to live, to eat and to beget children and it was the creative force of nature that supplied all these needs.

It was therefore around these basic needs that prehistoric religion grew and developed. The primitive humanity conceptualised and

concretised the mysterious life giving forces of nature in terms of their own day to day existence and experiences. To them woman's body was a great mystery. As James Laver has said, "ever since the first dawn of thought gleamed upon the dark landscape of instinct, man has regarded woman with a mixture of attraction and awe. Woman as the Gate of Life; woman as the object of desire: between these two poles have his emotions swung. The body of woman has always been heavy with magic, mysterious as life itself. Somehow it was more deeply embedded in nature than man's own body, more responsive to its rhythms."[1].

The first fumbling attempts towards understanding the generative force of nature in terms of the female body appear in the archaeological record dating to the upper Palaeolithic some 25-30 thousand years ago. But the mystery of female biology has been with us at least for the last 200.000 years Her body bled painlessly in rhythm with the moon and was the source which brought new life. It was also a mystery that her body produced both male and female children and provided the young with nourishment by making milk. The woman was thus source of life, of nourishment and sustainer of all beings.

As Joseph Campbell has suggested," there can be no doubt that in the very earliest ages of human history the magical force and the wonder of the female was no less a marvel than the universe itself. [2] The idea of fatherhood and the role of man in sexual reproduction was to come much later in human history. Primitive man was not aware of any relationship between an occasional sexual encounter with the female of his species and the offspring of that encounter so many months later. In fact even to-day there are some primitive societies who believe that sex and pregnancy are completely unrelated.

Anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski has described certain tribes of Trobriand islands who believe that it helps to have a virgin's vagina opened by a man for easier entrance into her womb of the future child's spirit.[3] Scholars such as Jaqueta Hawkes, James Fraser, Margaret Mead and many other anthropologists have also suggested that in the very early stages of mankind's development the idea that man had to do anything at all in the making of that baby was beyond the comprehension of primitive humanity They therefore considered woman as parthenogenetic creating from

herself without the help of male insemination.

The first female figurines known to us are the so called *Venus*es from the Palaeolithic times. These are generally made of bone, stone and bas-relief and nearly two hundred such female figurines have been found at dwelling sites all across Eurasia from the Pyrenees in Western Europe to lake Baikal in Central Siberia. None of these figurines resemble each other but they are alike in one respect: all share an emphasis on those parts of the body associated with reproduction. These figurines are not sex symbols but are the magic images of the mysterious powers of woman to create life and sustain it. In these figurines the primitive artist expressed what was in his/her mind - the great life generating powers of nature as embodied in the female organs of maternity. For the primitive artist, these parts were not physical organs but numinous symbolic centres of a woman's creative force and the display of her breasts, belly, or the entire naked body was a form of divine epiphany.

He/She rendered these parts elaborately and in great detail and out of all proportion to the entire body. No attempt was made to delineate other limbs or head realistically. All the attention of the primitive artist was centred on the embodiments of the great life - bringing power of the female anatomy. If we are to judge from the way these *Venus* figurines were positioned and located in caves, hearths, niches and graves we get the impression that they were the first cult objects and that the woman was venerated as a source of life and fecundity as far back as 25 to 35 thousands years ago. It would therefore appear that primitive mankind attached a certain sacredness to the generative power of woman.

The wide spread occurrence of these grotesque little figurines suggest that humanity had made a religious discovery centred on the fecundity of woman . Thus the female is the earliest form of Godhead conceived by mankind and the figurines of naked females representing function of fertility were the first graven images that they came to worship. We have briefly mentioned that the birth of civilisation occurred in the West Asian region of Fertile Crescent. It has also been mentioned that the transition from hunting and gathering to civilisation was brought about when humanity took to agriculture. It is said that agriculture was the discovery of woman. While her menfolk in pre-agricultural societies were busy

in hunting and fishing, it was she armed with a stick sought edible roots or gathered berries and seeds of wild grasses that grew around her encampment. Knowledge of plants, born of long and keen observation, led her to experiment in cultivation.

During the Neolithic period it was the woman who, by introducing agriculture, brought many innovations to society. Amongst the contemporary and historic hunting and gathering people, as among our remote hunting and gathering ancestors, 70 to 80 percent of group's subsistence comes from the woman's food gathering activities. It was woman who reputedly domesticated fire. It was she who was the first potter, the first weaver and was the first to gather and study medicinal plants. As agriculture was connected with seasons, it became necessary to study and keep record of the natural phenomenon and thus the woman again was the first to study heavens and the movements of the stars with which the cycle of seasons was connected.

Woman was thus the first astronomer also. A Mother Goddess figurine, called the *Venus of Laussel*, recovered from Dordogne in France and dated to about 19,000. B.C.E., holds in her right hand a crescent horn with 13 notches carved on it. The horn represents the moon and the notches represent 13 lunar months in a year and their connection with the biological rhythms of her own body.

And when agriculture replaced hunting women came to control both the new food supply and the wealth it generated. They were responsible for the agricultural revolution in the first place and continued to be in charge of its production. This may perhaps be the origin of certain primitive societies which were built around women even on the highest level. When the cult of female fecundity was brought into relation with the fecundity of earth the obvious analogy of woman's life giving and nourishing powers with those of the earth must have led man to associate fertile womanhood with an idea of the motherhood of nature. In primitive agricultural communities, the earth was therefore understood by analogy to be the great womb out of which all life emerged. The Earth Mother was considered as the generative power in nature as a whole. She now was responsible not only for creating life but also for controllable food supply to sustain it.

In the Sumerian mythology Goddess *Ninlil* was revered for having

provided for Her people with an understanding of sowing and harvesting methods. It has been conjectured that agriculture must have first grown up around the shrines of this Mother Goddess. The fertility of the earth was thought to be bound up with feminine fecundity and therefore women became responsible for the abundance of harvests for they knew the mystery of creation. This is apparent in the ritual and its symbolism centred in the various aspects of fecundity which became a recurrent phenomenon and dominating influence throughout the region. In representing this feminine principle of the Great Mother, or the Earth Mother, in art the Neolithic artist followed his predecessors of the Palaeolithic times in exaggerating the organs of maternity and emphasising the conditions of pregnancy and childbirth. The life-producing Mother became the personification of fertility and around Her a network of emotions and sentiments collected which gave a sacred significance to the female principle in all its attributes.

Archaeological evidence suggests that in all the Neolithic and early chalcolithic societies the Great Mother was revered as the Supreme Deity. The cult of this Mother Goddess has been found at Jericho and Catal Huyuk Neolithic substratum dating to the 7th millennium B.C.E. Female figurines with emphasis on breasts, the navel and the vulva region, representing the maternal aspects of the Mother Goddess have in fact been found all over the Fertile Crescent of the Chalcoloithic age. At first small shrines and later splendid temples were built to house this feminine principle. And these shrines and temples became social and economic centres and provided the seed nucleus for future towns and great cities of that age.

Woman assumed a many sided personality - a mother, an untouched maiden, a lover and a bride. She had many names such as *Ninhursaga, Mah, Inanna, Nintu, Isis, Cybele*. The Assyrians called Her *Mylitta* or *Milidath*, the Mother. To the Persians She was *Anahita* and the pre-Muslim Arabs called Her *Alitta*. The Chaldeans knew Her as *Delephat*, the Babylonians as *Ishtar*. In the Bible we read of Her as *Assera* or *Astarte* and the Elamites, as we have seen, called Her *Pinkir* or *Kiririsha*. Wherever She was and whatever Her name, She was worshipped as the Great Genetrix the presiding Deity of procreation. The religion of the Great Mother was not confined to one tribe, one people but was a

universal religion that cut across cultures with different languages and its influence ranged from Spain to Central Asia. In Neolithic times it was diffused throughout Eurasia and Africa.

2. Mother Goddess In Pre-Agrarian India

The religion of the Great Mother was taken from the Mesopotamian mythogenetic zone to India via Elam by the first agriculturists who founded the small farming communities in Balochistan. Here She encountered an entirely different culture zone of considerable force which owed nothing to the west Asian Neolithic continuum but danced to the tune of a different drummer - a native Indian mythical zone exhibiting characteristically Indian traits such as worship of sacred trees (*Pipal* & *Tulsi*) and *Yoga*, which were unknown to west Asia at that time. The idea of a Mother Goddess was also there but it was conceived and developed in ways quite different from those of West Asian Neolithic.

This Indic mythogenetic centre has been located by Prof. Norman Brown between 500 to a 1000 miles east of the Indus.[4] Its inspiration came from the humid equatorial zone which extends from west Africa, through the Indian archipelago to Melanesia and central America. This is a timeless world of gardeners of such plants as coconuts, sago palms, bananas, tubers, yams, taro, etc. and of domesticated animals such as chicken and pig. The antiquity of this culture cannot be fixed precisely because the inhabitants never built any structures in material more durable than bamboo, grass and leaves in contrast to the stone and metal ages of northern zones.

However, as the remains of Homo Erectus have been found in Java besides Africa, it can be said that this zone has been the home of mankind for at least half a million years or so. Vegeculture, i.e., the growing of tubers, roots or rhizomes in humid zones is older than agriculture. In recent excavations in south America in the plains of Ranch Peludo in Venezuela and Momil in Columbia it has been found that the vestiges of the cultivation of cassava were below the level of cultivation of maize which signifies the priority of vegeculture. Similarly excavations in the "Cave of the Phantoms" in Thailand have yielded remains of cultivated peas, beans and roots of tropical plants which are dated to 9000 B.C.E. at least a thousand years prior to the Neolithic revolution in west Asia.

In this tropical plant world mankind received a kind of insight, quite different from the northern zone, in the working of mother nature. A myth widely known in this region is that the tubers and fruit trees were born from the body of an immolated divinity. The most famous myth comes from Ceram, one of the islands off New Guinea, which says that from the dismembered and buried body of a semi-divine maiden *Haiunwele* sprang plants until then unknown. Another myth explains that the plants grew out of the excreta of a divine being or an ancestor and when his people discovered the repulsive source of their food they murdered him and dismembered his body and buried the pieces. Food plants and other elements of culture sprang from his corpse.

It is clear from these myths that the food plants, contrary to the myths of agriculturists, were not a gift from the gods above, but were the result of a primordial event which was murder. It was also noticed by those primitive planters that the plants were being continually killed through the gathering of their fruits and yet they overcame this death and were born again in that they produced their fruits again and again after each death. This observation introduced death and birth in the religion and social institutions that are still in force. The sum total of the mythologies of this region was, therefore, based on death and sex. We learn that the plants and animals on which man lives derive from death through murder and that the gods who brought death into this world also brought organs of sex into existence because "death without reproduction would be a calamity as would reproduction without death."

As we have noted, waves of migrations from this domain of culture of Austric speakers had peopled India from prehistoric times. Not so long ago, Khonds, a people of Proto-Australoid stock of Orissa, Bengal and Bihar, did offer blood sacrifices to the Earth Goddess. The victim to be sacrificed was called a *Meriah* and was set apart, often for years, for this purpose. The *Meriah* was regarded as a consecrated being and was treated with extreme affection and respect. On the appointed day, usually before the sowing, he was shorn of hair and anointed with oil and turmeric, taken around the village in a procession and then killed by strangulation.

The participants in the sacrifice then rushed and hewed pieces of his flesh to be buried in their fields in the hope of getting bumper

crops, health and prosperity. This calmly ruthless power of the equatorial zone of timeless vistas has, in the words of Joseph Campbell, "supplied the drone base of whatever song has ever been sung in India of man, his destiny and escape from that destiny".[5] There is an exact analogy between the fertility rites practised by the Khonds and Harappan iconography.

An oblong seal discovered at Harappa depicts a female seated or kneeling with a male figure standing besides her with what looks like a sickle in his hand. Obviously the female is about to be sacrificed. The myth underlying this seal is of a divine being slain, cut up, and parts buried which thereupon turn into food plants. In fact the reverse of this seal shows an upside down female figure (or is she lying down prone as a dead body?) with legs apart and a plant issuing from her womb. Later when the cult of the goddess was accepted by the Brahmanical religion, the *Markanddeya Purana* in its well known section called *Devi Mahatmya* (Cantos 81-93) put the following words in the mouth of the goddess; "I shall nourish the whole world with the life sustaining plants which shall grow from my own body and I shall be called *Sakambhari*. This word is translated as "the Herb bearing".

This is a confirmation of the myth underlying the aforementioned Harappan seal. There is yet another seal which depicts a nude female standing in a tree, or a bush, and seven human figures kneeling before her, confirming once again the connection of the goddess with the plant world.

There survives in India, even to this day, the worship of the Mother Goddess of terrible aspects who demands bloody sacrifices. A number of ceramic goddess-figurines of pre-Harappan times have been recovered from sites in Balochistan which bear no resemblance to the west Asian models. They have hideous faces designed to inspire awe and terror. At a couple of sites, namely Dabar Kot and Quetta Valley, these figurines have been found in conjunction with alters with drains obviously for blood sacrifices. At the Quetta site even a human skull was found under the alter.

These bring to mind *Kali* of later times who demands bloody sacrifices lest her creative potency fail her. Her cult propounds the belief that birth and death are inseparable and the joy and grief spring from the same source, that the frightening

manifestation of the divine should be faced calmly. This aspect of the Mother Nature as an ogress, springs from the soil of equatorial world of ritual death from which life proceeds. She, in her various manifestations, was (and,continues to be) the most popular deity of the Austro-Asiatic people of India.

She was called *Vindhyavasini*, dweller of the Vindhya mountains of Central India, and was worshipped by tribals of that region such as *Sabaras* and by brigands and outcasts. Her worship involved eating of meat and drinking of wine and her worshipper brought her sacrificed animals and occasionally humans. *Vindyavasini* was worshipped at a place where the Vindhyas approach the river Ganges near Mirzapur. It is on record that human sacrifices were offered to her image and the blood was never allowed to get dry.

Similarly other indigenous goddesses of terrifying aspect dealing with death and birth such as *Kali and Candi*, *Seetala* etc were worshipped by people who were described in the early Brahmanical literature as *mlecchas*, that is non-Aryans. In time all these goddesses coalesced in the spouse of *Siva* under different names such as *Uma, Parvati* and *Gauri, Durga, Kali. Bhairavi* etc

3. Mother Goddess of Neolithic West Asia Comes to India

The Mother Goddess of the Neolithic west Asia is associated with agriculture, arts of a literate civilisation, writing and a professional priesthood. She was brought to the Indian subcontinent by the Proto-Elamo-Dravidian speakers. The remains of Harappa culture have brought to light a large number of nude or semi nude terra-cota figurines of this Goddess. But the number of the representatives of Mother Goddess figurines with accentuated feminine physiology is extremely limited. The majority of images found are in sharp contrast to the *Venus* type of images, so prevalent in the west, in which the breasts, the rump, hips and genitals are exaggerated. The only possible explanation for this could be that in Harappan Culture, as we shall see later, the idea, apparently of Austric inspiration (the word *linga.*, i.e phallus, is after all of Austric origin), of macro and micro reproduction through sexual union had been developed to such an extent that the male and female sex organs themselves had become the object of deep veneration. Therefore the need for accentuating the sexual

attributes of the Mother Goddess figurines was perhaps considered redundant.

In the west Asian iconography we come across a Goddess either riding or accompanied by a lion. At Catal Huyuk, which was one of the early centres where agriculture developed, was found a figurine of the Great Mother in a grain bin. She was accompanied by two large felines, perhaps leopards. The figurine was placed in the grain bin obviously to promote the fertility of crops. When the worship of the Great Mother was taken to Crete she is shown on an impression of a seal from Knossos as standing on a mound accompanied by two lions. One of the principal epithets of the chief Canaanite goddess was *Lion Lady*. The Egyptian goddess *Sekhmet* was a lioness

In a cultic stand recovered from Taanach in Israel a nude goddess is shown as grasping the ears of two ferocious looking lions. *Lilith* who was a goddess of child birth during Sumerian times is shown in bas-relief as standing over a lion . In one of the Sumerian seals their chief goddess *Innanna* is depicted as warrior goddess and she is accompanied by a lion . All these divinities riding or accompanied by lions correspond with *Durga* whose mount is also a lion or a tiger.

In another Harappan seal a slender goddess with crescent-shaped headdress kneels over a *neem* tree, her arm outstretched towards a tiger below that turns its neck to face her. In yet another seal the goddess stands behind the tiger and is about to seize it from behind. These seals therefore attest to the worship of *Durga* in Harappan Civilisation. It has been suggested that even her name is derived from an Anatolian goddess *Traqqas*. She was conceptualised as benign and bountiful

It is in this aspect that *Durga* is associated, with agricultural themes. *Durga Puja* is celebrated from the first to the ninth days of the bright half of the lunar month of *Asvin* which coincides with the autumn harvest in North India. and it is thus clear that this ceremony is a harvest festival in which the Goddess is propitiated as the power of plant fertility. It is relevant to note that a similar festival of the Great Mother was celebrated in Elam at the new Moon towards the beginning of autumn. In the groves of the Goddess *Pinikir* fattened animals were slain to honour

the Goddess apparently to promote the growth of fruits of earth and of kine[6]. The sacrifice of animals to the Goddess continues to be an essential part of the Festival of *Durga* to this day.

A central object of worship in the *Durga* puja, however, is a bundle of nine different plants, *navapattrika*, which is identified with the Goddess herself. During Her worship in this form the officiating priest anoints Her with water from various sacred rivers and also with agricultural products such as sesame oil and sugarcane juice and certain soils associated with fertility. While doing so he also recites the invocation." Om you are rice. Om you are wheat. Om you are barley. Om you are our life".

It is thus clear that *Durga* is not merely a power inherent in all vegetation but is the power that underlies life in general. Perhaps the later Sanskrit terms *Annada* and *Anapurana*, i.e., "Giver of Food" and "Full of Food" were coined to describe her. It is for this reason that in the Hindu philosophic idea of a later age *Durga* is identified with *Sakti, Maya and Prakriti*. As *Prakriti*, *Durga* is inextricably associated with the physical world She creates, sustains and protects in Her various forms. Her association with *Prakriti* and *Sakti* was later destined to play a central role in Tantrism.

There is one sure instance where a Sumerian goddess appears to have travelled to India via Elam. This is the case of *Innana* one of the chief divinity of the Sumerian pantheon. A temple dedicated to her was excavated at Tell Brak in the Khabur valley wherein this goddess was found to be represented only by the imagery of her eyes. The idea that the goddess was all seeing first travelled to Elam where the Elamite chief goddess *Pinkir or Kiririsha* was thus represented.

In India her worship was first located in Balochistan where even during the period of Islamization she was venerated as *Nani Bibi*. Later her worship was taken down to the plains. There is a legend that the ruler of the area where her temple was located had a dream one night in which the eye goddess told him that as she was a goddess of the mountains she was not happy in the plains and that the ruler would gain spiritually if he could build her a temple high in the mountains. The ruler obliged and built her a temple which is now known as *Naina Devi* temple, i.e., the temple

of the *Eye Goddess,* and is located on a narrow peak about 5000 feet high overlooking the Govind Sagar behind the Bhakara Dam.

I have visited that shrine and the only imagery there is of the *EYES* of the goddess and nothing else. *Innanna* too was a goddess of the mountains and was always depicted in Sumerian seals standing on a mound representing a hill. According to Sumerian mythology when An, their chief god, decided to divide the world amongst his children, Innana was given the valley of the Indus. *Naina Devi* is a benign goddess and no bloody sacrifices are offered to her.

During the centuries preceding the emergence of full blown Harappa civilisation this Goddess of fecundity of west Asian origin took over the aspects of the goddesses, associated with power, blood and battle, of indigenous people of India of Austric origin such as *Sabaras* and *Pulindas* etc. It was from these two different but complimentary ideologies that the concept of a Goddess with 108 names came into being. In her terrible form demanding blood sacrifices She is known as *Candika, Kali, Vindhyvasani, Camunda,* and many others.

It is also possible that many regional and local goddesses of disease such as cholera and small pox may have contributed to the evolution of these terrifying forms. Her benevolent forms include *Sati, Uma, Parvati and Gauri etc.* These different names and forms were merely transient and adventitious disguises that overlay a unitary spiritual reality that was *Mahadevi* the Great Goddess.

Durga is this *Mahadevi*'s most common and favourite form and at a higher level of abstraction She is considered to be the Energy *(Sakti) of Siva.* . From a theological point of view *Mahadevi* and *Durga* are one and the same deity. *Durga*'s exploits are the most commonly celebrated events in *Mahadevi*'s mythology in the *Puranas* the most important text being the section of the *Markandya Purana* known as *Devimahatmaya,* also called the *Candimahatmay and Durgasaptasti.* The remains of the ancient civilisation of Harappa have brought to light a great number of terra-cotta figurines which are considered by scholars to be the popular representation of the Mother Goddess whose worship was therefore most popular in that culture.

The concept of the ultimate Godhead being a female rather than a male had nowhere else in the ancient world been so elaborately developed as in Harappa culture.

The Great Mother reigned supreme till the arrival of northern migrants whose gods were predominantly male. According to hymns in the Rg Veda in the beginning there was only one *Power* called *Asura* who divided itself into two cosmic groups: one represented the Aryans themselves and the other consisted of the enemies of the Aryans. They were called *Danavas and Dityas*, because their mother was Goddess *Danu* or *Ditti*. The Aryans called themselves as *A-Ditya* that is *Not Dityas* - not the people of *Ditti*. This would strongly suggest that this mythical structure was created and appropriate hymns composed after the Aryans came into contact with the worshippers of the Great Mother of Harappa civilisation even in its decadent form.

The Aryan's chief god was *Indra* whose most well known exploit is the of killing of *vritra*, a huge snake, and his mother *Ditti*. When they lay dead they were symbolised as a cow and her calf. Both images of the snake and cow and the calf were associated with the worship of the Goddess in whole of West Asia.. To the ancients the snake represented the spirit of earth and water, of healing and oracular power and fertility. Likewise the cow and the calf represented the maternal blessings of the Great Mother. The killing of *Vritra* and his mother perhaps symbolises the triumph of the religion of the patriarchal Aryans. They overshadowed the religion of the Great Mother for over a thousand years. But, as we shall talk below, the triumph of the Aryan male gods was just a passing phase and the Great Mother, returned with great vigour and elan to claim the worship and devotion of masses of present day Hindus.

References

1. James Laver - Homage to Venus - 1948 - p.2.
2. Joseph Campbell - Masks of God - Primitive Mythology - Viking New York 1970 - p.315.
3. Bronislaw Malinowski - Magic, Science & Religion - Anchor Books New York 1954 - p.229.

4. Norman Brown - The Beginning of Civilization in India - Supplement to the Journal of American Oriental Society - December 1941 - p.44.
5. Joseph Campbell - Masks of God - Oriental Mythology- Viking Press New York p.164.
6. Walther Hinz - The Lost World of Elam - New York University Press 1973 - p.60.

Tantrism: Ritualisation of the Creative Power of the Great Mother 4

1. Tantrism is Older than the Aryans

The Tantric tradition is very ancient but its origin is a matter of confusion amongst the scholars. In their book "The Tantric Way" Mookerjee & Khanna say that the Tantric rituals and symbols are found in the Harappan Culture in the form of yogic postures, the Mother Goddess and fertility cults but Tantra's broad base is undoubtedly of Indo-Aryan origin.[1] In view of what has been stated in the previous chapters this statement is self-contradictory.

There are also others who believe that the source of Tantrism is to be found in Vedic religion itself. There is no Tantrism in Vedic and Brahmanic traditions. In the post Vedic literature there are some obscure elements that later evolved and became part of Tantrism. Certain references in the texts of Tantrism to Vedic tradition should not be taken as proof of either the Vedic nature of Tantrism or of its direct links with the Veda. Such references were introduced much later to facilitate the acceptance of tantric texts by orthodox circles. For example, a Tantric text, Gnadharva Tantra, states that an adept should be a believer in the Vedas whose faith and refuge is *Brhaman* and who is believer in the *Advaita Vedanta*. The truth of the matter is that as Tantrism is chiefly associated with the cult of *Sakti*, the Mother Goddess, that in ancient times reigned over an immense Aegeo- Afroasiatic territory, it is not only older than the Indo-Aryans but its inspiration goes even beyond the Harappa Culture.

However, unlike Jainism and Buddhism which excluded and refuted the Vedic tradition, Tantrism accepted, assimilated and adjusted itself to that tradition. It borrowed its metaphysics from various schools of Hindu philosophy, *Vedanata* in particular, and in turn brought to bear an immense influence on the *Epics* and the *Puranas*. The *Linga, Kalika and Devi Purans* show a marked

influence of Tantrism. It is for this reason that it has a flavour of the Aryan/Brahmanic orthodoxy. Otherwise in its fundamentals it draws its inspiration from the ancient belief that the human fertility, particularly the female fertility, belongs to the same order of existence as the fertility of nature. In other words human reproduction is equated with productive processes of nature.

In the beginning it was believed by the primitive mankind that woman reproduced parthenogenetically, that is, without the aid of male insemination. However, with the domestication of barnyard animals Neolithic men began to make certain observation concerning the rhythms of procreation and to discover that, for example, cows, goats and sheep did not produce young without the co-operation of their appropriate males. The next step was that they began to compare their own actions with those of other animals, and to discover, to their great astonishment that they too had a part in the process of generation. This led to the belief that the sexual act was the prime mover of life.

Whereas the Palaeolithic artist had used the body merely as a background for representing generative organs of the Mother Goddess. the Neolithic artists did away with the body altogether and simply created images of male and female organs in union because it were these organs that represented the generative force and not the individuals who bore them. To the primitive man the world out there was hostile, harsh and cruel. He was defenceless against the powers of nature. Just as he betook himself to the shelter of rocks and caves to protect himself from cold, heat, rain and snow, and devised tools and implements to eke out a living, he created magic to deal with the unseen powers of nature. Magic was the first stage of human intellectual development, a sort of primitive science, a ritual performance or an activity that the primitive mankind imagined could lead to the influencing of human affairs and the impersonal mystical forces beyond the ordinary human sphere. Such activity or performance involved the use of objects and recitation of spells or both by a shaman or a magician. In his book *The Golden Bough*, James Fraser analysed the principles of thought that lay behind the cause-effect relationship between magical and natural events. It was that *like produces like* or that *effect resembles its cause.* This is called homeopathic magic, i.e., according to a law of similarity, an action produces a like reaction. In other words like produces like.

Since the fecundity of earth and the fecundity of woman was viewed as being of the same order it was assumed that coition which ensures fertility in woman would naturally enhance the fertility of the earth. and therefore by imitation one could influence the other. When mankind came to depend for its sustenance more on the products of the earth than that of the chase, the need for promoting the earth's fertility assumed greater urgency and sex assumed the role of the most potent homeopathic magic of all. Human copulation was supposed to bring about copulation of the generative powers of nature and thereby bring fertility to the world. Thus, orgiastic fertility rites, described below, all over the primitive world, were basically intended to stimulate the crops through sympathetic magic of human procreation.

2. Tantrism is Agricultural Magic

It is reported that in Central America, even to the times of the arrival of white men, the native Americans were extremely anxious that at planting time the sowing of seeds be done in a most auspicious hours of generation. Therefore, four days prior to sowing the men separated from their wives in order that on the night preceding the sowing they could indulge in their passion to the fullest extent. This intercourse was even enjoined upon them by their shamans as their religious duty. Amongst the Baganda of Central Africa somewhat similar ceremony was performed in order to transmit the human virtue of reproduction to the growth of plantains their staple diet.

There a mother who was considered to be particularly fertile, one who had given birth to twins, was asked to lay down in the grove of plantain with its flower between her legs Then her husband came along and knocked away the flower with his genital member. Among the Bambara of the Niger Basin in West Africa the idols of male and female gods are believed to couple at the time of annual sacrifices offered before the planting season. Even to-day in some parts of Java the farmer and his wife visit their fields after dark and copulate for the purpose of promoting the growth of crops.

Amongst the Kiwai people of New Guinea vaginal secretions are used extensively in the rituals of gardening. When the first shoots of yams have sprouted from the ground a woman, usually the mother of the garden's owner, smears her vaginal fluid at the plant

roots. Then again, at the time of planting taro a woman is made to lay down nude in the garden and her husband inserts a digging stick in her vagina and then digs a hole in the ground between her legs.

The Oraons in India celebrate the marriage of heaven and earth by remarrying their priest and his wife. And on this occasion all of them eat, drink and indulge in sexual orgies with the sole purpose of making mother earth more fruitful. Similar ceremonial promiscuity was indulged in by the European peasantry not so long ago. The fertile powers of the female genital organ could not possibly be more concretely stated than the above quoted examples.

It is obvious that in the early stages of agriculture there was a wide spread belief that the productivity of nature was dependent on human reproductive functions and could be enhanced by performing these functions.. As the urban Indus valley civilisation drew its sustenance and wealth from the soil it must have entertained and retained similar beliefs and practices.

The origin of Tantrism is to be traced to these very magical beliefs and practices which were considered essential to promote the fertility of the earth. In other words Tantrism had its origin in the agricultural magic. That the cult of the worship of abstract symbols of human sexual union flourished in the urban civilisation of the Indus valley is demonstrated by quantities of smooth round stones rising out of others shaped like elongated saucers, suggestive of *lingam and yoni* in union , unearthed at Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Chanhudaro and elsewhere in Punjab and Sindh.

The existence of this ancient cult in the Indus valley is attested by the fact that the Aryans reviled the worshippers of phallus and there is in the Rg Veda a prayer to *Indra* not to permit those whose god is phallus to destroy the Aryan supplicant's rites. This cult, Mother Goddess figurines and certain themes depicted in Harappan seals (*Sakambhari* seal from Harappa referred to in the previous chapter) led Marshall to suggest that the beginning of Tantrism could be traced to Harappa civilisation. This has since been confirmed by other scholars notably Pran Nath and Kosambi [2].

According to the latter, "there is every reason to believe that a good deal of Indus art and hieroglyphics are intimately connected with Tantric motifs". E.O James has also suggested that the

primacy of the Goddess in the process of generation is borne out by all the available evidence from the Indus valley[3]. Ehrenfels echoes these views when he says that medieval and modern India owes many impulses, elements and cultural moulds to the pre-Aryan matriarchal civilisation of the Indus valley [4]. Mircea Eliade has observed that religion of the Mother Goddess "was always the chief form of devotion among the autochthonous people of India. In this sense, the irresistible tantric advance also implies a victory for the pre-Aryan popular strata"[5] It has been suggested by Dowman that Tantrism was a system of ritual magic associated with the fertility of the Mother Goddess and had its roots in pre-Aryan India[6]

As stated earlier, the Aryan speakers were flanked on the west, south and east by speakers of Dravidians and Austric languages. In the Indus valley in the west the Dravidian speakers remained strong even in historical times. Alexander is said to have encountered stiff resistance from a people who are called by the Greek writers as *Arabatai* which is corrupt version of Telegu word *aravalu* meaning Dravidian. [7]

The resurgence of Tantrism in the 5th century C.E occurred in these very areas bordering the domain of Aryans. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Tantrism, which is an amalgam of Dravidian and Austric ideologies, developed in those areas where the Aryan influence was minimal. The fact that Hinglaj in Balochistan remained a very important centre of Tantric worship prior to and early Islamic days again points to the Indus valley being the original cradle of Tantrism.

3. The Essentials of Tantrism

What is Tantra ? It is a word derived from the root *tan* which means *to extend, to spread, or to propagate.* In his Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Monier Williams has suggested that the word *tan* as used in *Harivamsa* and *Bhagwat Purana* is in the sense of enlarging the human family or procreation. It is therefore not surprising that the fundamental outlook of Tantrism is derived from sexual imageries and the texts are permeated with strong elements of magic the central theme of which is that of the union of male and female as sex is regarded as the primary physical basis of creation and evolution.

However, the most remarkable thing about Tantrism is that it regards the female principle or *Prakriti* as the fundamental reality and the cause of this universe. She is eternally fruitful source of everything. All things come from her and return to her. The totality of Cosmos is her body. She gives birth to everything from her womb and nourishes all from her breasts. Each separate being is a manifestation of her and all things share in her life through an eternal cycle of birth and rebirth. The *yoni-lingam stones* and the Tantric rite of *maithuna* or sexual intercourse suggests that the Indus valley people were well aware of the role of male in the procreative process and yet they chose to assign only a subordinate role to the male.

Man, as we have seen, became aware of the role of male in the creative process rather late in time. The Mother Goddess was then assigned a male god as a consort or a son to play the role of the begetter. However, from Levant to India She continued to reign supreme with the male god strictly her subordinate. It is clear from the myths of *Inanna - Dumuzi, Ishtar - Tammuz and Aphrodite - Adonis* that the mysteries of sexual power were vested in the feminine and it was the young god who was destined to die and later resurrected by the feminine power. It is therefore reasonable to assume that *Siva* or his proto type too was originally assigned a similar role.

In the Tantric tradition the Goddess is the active principle in the cosmos without whom her male consort *Siva* would be just a corpse. She is symbolised in the letter *i* in the word *Siva*. Without the letter *i Siva* is *Sava* that is a corpse. This is apparent from the repeat motif in Tantric iconography that depicts *Kali*, the creator and destroyer, as sitting in sexual union on the dead body of her spouse *Siva*. This shows that the male principle is unable to manifest on its own and that it is only through the female principle that creation is actualised.

It was the Goddess who was the inexhaustible source of new life and consequently the powers manifested in fertility in all its forms personified the Goddess who was the incarnation of all the reproductive forces. It was She who renewed vegetation, prompted the growth of crops and propagation of man and beast. She was the embodiment of creative powers and Her male spouse was merely an auxiliary in the process. This theme of the female

principle that moves while the male principle is acted upon but remains immobile was adopted from Tantrism by the Sankhya philosophy as the interplay between *Purusa* and *Prakriti.*

In ancient Greece they used to celebrate a festival, *Diasia*, in honour of their chief Indo-European god Zeus. However, this festival had nothing to do with that god and in its rites he had no place at all. The festival was in fact devoted to the worship of a snake symbolising the creative powers of the Great Mother. In some parts of India the country folks celebrate a ritual called *Ganesa Caturthi Vrata* in the month of *Bhadra* (August-September) in honour of *Ganesa*, a Johny come lately god in the Hindu pantheon. Although the name of the rite is associated with *Ganesa* he has, like the Greek Zues, very little to do with it. In fact he disappears very early in the performance of the rite. This is purely an agricultural rite to bring prosperity to the land and homestead and is mainly performed by woman without the aid of a Brahmin priest. It is in fact more appropriately called *Gauri puja,* In some versions of this rite *Siva* secretly follows his spouse *Durga- Gauri*, the chief goddess of the harvest, to this rite hidden behind her *sari* and is represented at the rite by a *lota* or a pot.

This conclusively proves that in the early agricultural rites male gods were not primary and therefore had either no part or were reduced to a very subordinate position. Since Tantrism is an outcome of early magical rites associated with the fecundity of the earth it becomes understandable why it does not attach importance to the male principle. However, as in the rest of the world, the time came when *Siva*, the male god, usurped the place of the goddess. Yet it is the goddess, wife of *Siva*, who is most important as the *Sakti* or potency of her lord. Gods and goddesses are after all created by mankind in its own image and therefore they reflect in their celestial homes the same relationship between the sexes as it exists in the phenomenal world. In the Indian scheme of things the gods like the Indian males sat back calm and aloof and their wives did the work. In Tantras Absolute Reality has two aspects static and dynamic or negative and positive represented by *Siva* and *Sakti*. *Siva* is pure consciousness, qualityless and as such represents the static or negative principle. *Sakti* on the other hand is the Cosmic Energy, the world force and as such dynamic or positive part of Reality. This concept of *Sakti* is not that of an

abstract kinetic energy but a vital personal entity which is called *Parasakti* the Supreme Being of Power who is responsible for the creation and dissolution of the entire phenomenal world.

The belief associated with early agriculture was that the productive activity of nature was dependent upon the human reproduction, more particularly with the reproductive functions of the female and is centred on her organs of reproduction. This is amply proved by a ritual which is central to the performance of *Durga Puja* and is called *Puran Ghara* where *ghara* means an earthen pot used in the Indian households to keep water cool in the summer. *Durga* is chiefly associated with agriculture The rite of *puran ghara* confirms it. This is how Debiprasad Chatopadhyaya describes it:

" Five varieties of corn seeds (*panca sasya*) are scattered on a lump of flattened and square shaped clay. Then an earthen vessel filled with water is placed on it. Rice mixed with curds is put into the vessel. Round the neck of the vessel is tied a piece of red thread. Its open mouth is covered with five varieties of leaves. Then an earthen plate with rice and betel nut is placed on the leaves. On the plate of rice again is placed a fruit, preferably a green coconut with its stalk intact, and the fruit is smeared with vermilion. On the surface of the vessel is drawn the picture of a human baby with vermilion paste; it is called *sindura putli.* The flattened square- shaped clay on which the pot is placed, has a diagram drawn on it called *sarvatobhadra mandalam.* . It is one of those diagrams of Tantrism known as *yantras*. It's centre is occupied by the picture of a lotus with eight petals. In Tantrism *padama* or lotus is a symbolic representation of the female genital organ. We may now see the significance of the *puran ghara* being placed on the *sarvatobhadra mandlam. Plants and fruits are brought in contact with the female reproductive organ* (italics added). The same idea is repeated in the *puran ghara* itself. The vessel is the female womb and this womb is with a baby as represented by the picture of *sindura putali.*"[8] .

The whole ceremony of *puran ghara* is therefore a symbolic enactment of the reproduction of both human beings and vegetation from the generative organs of the female. Yet another distinctive feature of *Durga puja* that suggests its importance as a festival affecting the fertility of crops is the ribald behaviour of the devotees which is specially recommended in certain religious

texts as pleasing to the goddess. Such obscene behaviour is said to stimulate *Durga's* powers of fecundity for promoting the fertility of crops and animals.(*Kalika purana. 61*).

The genital area of the Goddess is regarded as the source and focus of feminine energy. In many parts of India megalithic domes and caves are so arranged as to represent the womb and their entrances resemble the *yoni* of the Great Mother. At the shrine of *Vaisnu Devi* in Jammu, pilgrims crawl on their bellies along a dark and wet narrow passage to reach the cave of the Goddess thus enacting the birth and rebirth imagery. No wonder we find in Tantrism the greatest emphasis being placed on the rituals centring round the female genitalia which are objects of worship as the most vigorous fecundating power. Discovery of thousands of ring stones, which have been identified by scholars as representing *yoni*, either by themselves or accompanied by *lingam*. in the Harappan ruins testify to the fact that such worship had its beginning in that culture.

In the famous shrine of goddess *Kamakhya* in Assam the image of the goddess is nothing but the *YONI*. It is painted with red paste to signify blood and rituals are done each month to suggest *Devi's* menstruation. In Tantric parlance *yoni* is called *lata* that is a creeper suggesting again the relationship between the *yoni* and vegetation. The worship of female genitalia is called *lata sadhana*. In this *sadhana* iconography plays an important role and *yantra* is an iconographic symbol of the goddess . The design of this *yantra* is intended to focus on the centre point which is the very essence of the goddess. It consists of interlocking isosolice triangles forming a polygonal pattern.

The triangle with the base up is *Siva* and the one with the base down is *Sakti*. It will thus be clear that although Tantra holds the concept of a composite male and female principle, it is the female principle that transcends the male. Accordingly, *Sakti* is endowed with all aspects of life from creative to dissolutive, sensual to sublime, benign to horrific. According to this concept in all Tantric rituals every woman is seen as the counterpart and reincarnation of *Sakti*, the cosmic energy.

The extant Tantric texts are less concerned with the primitive foundations of Tantrism than with the intricate edifice the later

thinkers built upon them For primitive Tantrism to deeply influence both classical Hinduism and Budhism soon after its reappearance in the early centuries of the Common Era, it must have had some relatively clear cut appeal and attractive philosophy. All Indian philosophy, whether Hindu, Buddhist or Jain, was a philosophy of rejection. The aim of this philosophy was release from the endless cycles of birth, death and rebirth and eventual escape through meditation, *yoga*, logic (*Nayaya* philosophy) etc from this worlds of pain and sorrow into non-existence i.,e., into a bliss of total extinction. All these system denied the world.

But Tantrism, rooted as it was in the primitive agricultural materialism, held that this world was real and an expression of the *Sakti*, the Great Mother. The term generally used for sacred places in Hinduism is *tirtha*, that is, a ford to cross over to life spiritual. Tantrists however prefer the term *pitha*, the seat. which signifies the rootedness of the goddess which emphasises her association with the earth itself and her motherly nature which casts her in the role of an ever present nurturing presence. In other words the goddess is to be viewed as firmly located in this world in the sense of being oriented towards such worldly concerns of her devotees as fertility, well-being and long life.

Thus if the real world was an expression of that Divinity than what was in it must be divine too and worthy of being worshipped rather than renounced. In this world view sex was not considered an abomination. On the contrary it was believed that as sex was the cause of the primal creation, the sex act should be treated as sacred. It was also believed that sex, if used properly with the aid of *yoga*, could lead to an altered state of consciousness that could win salvation in one life time.. This doctrine must have had tremendous appeal to the adherents of other religions. To an uncritical mind this would appear to be an hedonistic creed. However, there is more to Tantric indulgence in sex than meets the eye. If the aim were to simply gratify one's sexual needs one would not have to undergo the elaborately complicated and exceedingly difficult rites, rituals and procedures prescribed and practiced by the Tantrists.

References

1. Ajit Mookerji & Madhu Khanna - The Tantric Way - Boston 1977 - p.10.
2. Pran Nath - Indian Historical Quarterly vii 1-52 & D,D,Kosambi - Introduction to the Study of Indian History - Bombay 1958 - p.58.
3. E.O.James - The Ancient Gods - G.P.Putnam New York - p.52.
4. Quoted by Debiprasad Chattopadhaya - Lokyata - New Delhi 1967 - p.261.
5. Mircea Eliade - Yoga - Immortality & Freedom 1960 - p.202.
6. Keith Dowman - Masters of Enchantment - Inner Tradition International Ltd., Rochester, Vermont , 1988.
7. S.K.Chatterji - Contributions From Different Language-Cultural Groups - Cultural Heritage of India - Vol.I p.80 footnote.
8. Debiprasad Chattopadhaya - opp.cit. p.294-96

Yoga : Will to Power 5

1. The Origin & Aims of Yoga

Yoga as an ascetic and meditational practice is probably the most ancient Hindu religious practice. The complete absence of *Yoga* beliefs and practices in west Asian Neolithic and Chacolithic societies from where the seeds of civilisation based on cereal agriculture came to India, leads one to believe that this technique was the product of the Indian soil and owed nothing to the outside world. Evidence from images and seals from Indus valley of the 3rd millennium suggests that such practices were a part of the pre-Vedic Harappa civilisation. It is axiomatic not in only *yogic* circles but the entire Hindu thought that *Siva* is the *'Lord of Yoga"* and his sacred city is Benaras.

This city is located exactly in that mythogentic zone, proposed by Prof. Norman Brown, east of the Indus valley, which is the domain of that invisible counter player who has constantly supplied the drone base to the song of Hindu civilisation. It is from this zone that the *Yoga* practices spread to the west. This was the world of hunting and gathering societies of Austric origin. If Tantrism had its origin in the lowly agricultural magic, *Yoga* owed its origin to the various archaic traditions of ascetic spirituality and magical practices of the primitive hunters and gatherers that are known under the generic name of Shamanism.

Shamanism is one of mankind's most ancient traditions. The spade of the Archaeologist has uncovered evidence that shows that humans have been indulging in some kind of magico-spiritual practices to control the processes of nature for their own benefit for tens of thousands of years and yet there is no way to assess just how remote the origin of Shamanism could be. As Mircea Elaide has observed," nothing justifies the supposition that during hundreds of thousands of years that preceded early stone age,

humanity did not have a religious life as various as in the succeeding period."[1]

Just as the agricultural magic rites were important for an agrarian community to enhance the fertility of earth, kine and the general prosperity of the entire community so were the shamanistic practices for the hunters and gatherers. They too depended on the success of these magical performances in hunting and gathering of food and their very survival. As in the case of the hunting and gathering societies existing in some remote parts of the world even to this day, the primitive pre-agrarian communities of the Indian sub-continent also believed that it was possible by ecstatic spiritual virtuosi, religious symbolism and techniques of trance of Shamanism to win power to change the ordinary course of nature.

There was however a difference in the mythologies and ceremonials of the agrarians and the hunter-gatherers. In the case of the former the agricultural magic consisted of rich and complex ceremonies and rites in which the whole community participated. The case in point is the autumn festival of *Durga* in India and that of *Pinkir* in ancient Elam. Amongst the hunter-gatherers, on the other hand, the task was entrusted to one person - the tribe's witch doctor, medicine man, wizard or sorcerer or in short a Shaman. As Joseph Campbell has suggested, the accent of the planting rites was on a group and that of the hunter-gatherers on the individual[2].

Generally speaking shamanism was an hereditary profession as it was believed that only those whose ancestors were Shamans could receive the gift of shamanism. The Shamans were individuals who showed evidence of some extraordinary traits such as unusual behaviour or physical appearance, an illness such as epilepsy or some strange and inexplicable experience, some kind of intuitive mercurial personality etc which were interpreted as signs from the world of the spirits qualifying them for the task of looking after the welfare of a community of hunter-gatherers. To the people of their tribe these shamans were figures of awesome powers of healing and divination whose help was invaluable to the community in understanding the events and things which, in the course of their own every day life, were beyond their ken. These shamans were expected to foresee events in the distant future, discover lost animals, bring rain, forecast prospects for fishing and hunting, tame wild animals, heal the sick and revive the dead.

In order to acquire these occult powers a Shaman had to work hard by using various techniques such as breath control, physical exercises, self torture, abstinence, withdrawal, narcotics etc. Sometimes under the stimulus of such activities the practitioner quivered violently, blew into wild rages and fell into an unconscious trance like state. The Shaman while undertaking these unusual physical and mental activities did enter an altered state of consciousness during which he performed his miraculous deeds. The three key features of an experienced Shaman were: (i) He could enter altered states of consciousness at will, (ii) In this state he was said to experience his soul ranging through a three fold world system of upper, middle and lower worlds and while journeying through this threefold world system (iii) he acquired knowledge and occult powers for helping people in his community.[3]

The origin of Yoga is to be traced to the traditions of ecstatic experiences and acquisition of occult powers that belonged to the Shamanic heritage of the Austric people of pre-historic India. As Harzer has said, "Yoga was an inheritance from the aboriginal inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent" [4] The main aim of *Yoga* too was the acquisition of such powers for material gain. These paranormal psychic powers were called *Siddhis* and were said to be eight in number: (i) clairvoyance (ii) clairaudience (iii) moving through long distances quickly (iv) paranormal vocal power (v) assumption of whatever form the *Yogin* desired (vi) vanishing from sight at will (vii) turning base metals into gold and (viii) moving through air or flying.

By controlling both physical and mental processes the *Yogin* sought to bring nature under his control. Such activities, as any modern *yogi* will testify, did expand the practitioner's mind and powerfully influence the organic functions of his body. In such a heightened state the practitioner did actually feel that he was capable of superhuman powers, be it levitation, walking on water, becoming invisible, flying over the mountains, reviving the dead, entering into other people's bodies and many more acts of this nature. History, legend and folklore inform us that some *yogins* did in fact gain some of these powers. I have seen one *yogi* who chewed and swallowed glass and razor blades and drank a concoction of sulphuric, hydrochloric and nitric acid with nary an adverse effect.

Despite the reservations expressed by Patanjali about the *siddhis* he did include the methods of obtaining them in his *Yoga Sutras*, the earliest text book on this subject. No wonder the aim of the *yogins*, genuine or spurious, down the ages has been to attain these *siddhis* to gain worldly power and prestige. The *Yogis* have always been considered as *Mahasiddhas* - possessors of occult powers.

The origin and aims of *Yoga* show clearly that it involved no religious beliefs, no religious rites and above all there was no reference to god, soul and its liberation, heavens, prayers or sacrifices. As in the case of Shamanism the *yogi* did not supplicate to a divine power nor did he grovel before an arbitrary deity. *Yoga*, like its parent Shamanism, was a set of techniques, a method to achieve a self-severance from mundane existence, a state of heightened sensibility and awareness to obtain paranormal psychic powers. It was entirely materialistic in its out look and aimed purely at material gains.

The myths and folklore surrounding some of the greatest *yogins* such as *Gorakhnath* and *Matsyindranath* and other *Siddhas*, and the reverence accorded to them by the Indian populace at large, confirm that the way of *Yoga* was unrivalled in the attainment of miraculous powers that enabled the *yogins* to conquer death, transmute base metals into gold, become invisible, and generally perform what to an untrained eye must seem miracles.

It is learnt from the skeletal remains that a majority of the Harappan population was of Austric origin.. It is these people who contributed the techniques and practices of *Yoga* to the Harappan culture. The Harappans in turn valorised them by giving them an underpinning of primitive *Sankhya* metaphysics, Tantric rites and mystical physiology. Thus *Yoga* became an *askesis* which aimed at mastering organic life by stubborn opposition to the normal condition of life and in this way endowing the mind with supernatural powers to master the physiological functions of the body

2. The Ways to Achieve Siddhis or Occult Powers

The outlook of primitive Tantrism was utterly materialist. Even in later centuries when it was much influenced by Vedanta, Tantrism never let go of its materialistic outlook. Tantra accepted the Vedantic concepts of soul and its liberation but it differed from

Vedanta in that it believed that the Ultimate Truth was not an abstract principle transcending the universe but was immanent in it and it had to be realised in and through the human body which was holy as it had been created by a holy and sacred act of sex. It was not merely a thing but was an epitome of the universe - a microcosm in relation to macrocosm.

Tantrists believed that it was possible to understand the mystery of nature if one could understand the human body and therefore one must rise through and by means of one's body and not by rejection of it. In Tantrism the human body acquired a great importance. Unlike Upanisdic, Buddhist or Jaina thought, Tantrism did not consider the human body as a source of pain and suffering. It believed that body must be preserved in perfect condition as long as possible as an aid to meditation and final liberation.

There is a Tantric saying, *nandevo devam arcayet*, " by none but a god shall be a god worshipped". It was in the context of transmuting the human body into a divine body that the discipline and practice of *Yoga* comes into play. The yogi was enjoined not to neglect his body as it was both mind and matter each reacting upon the other. Neglect or mortification of the body would only produce disordered imagination rather than spiritual experience. The *yogic* discipline, as stated above, consisted in governing the body by regulating the motion of breathing. This gymnastic coupled with spiritual concentration was to conquer the instincts and destroy all kinds of enjoyment and suffering and prepare the body for a state of total illumination.

A modern adept, Gopi Krishna, has observed that all genuine religious experience is founded on the bedrock of a mental illumination received by mystics in an extraordinary state of mind which is brought about by interaction of psychosomatic organism of the human body by physical and spiritual discipline. It is neither brought by any miraculous influence exerted by God in chosen cases nor by a thought wave of a prophet. This phenomenon is purely biological in nature. And its secret was initially discovered " by a remote civilisation prior to the entry of the Aryans into India, for there are unmistakable signs that it was known to the denizens of the Indus Valley three thousand years before the birth of Christ." [5]

The Tantrists viewed the whole phenomenon of cosmic creation a result of the union of the two polarities, male and female or *Siva and Sakti*. Since the human body was an epitome of the universe - a microcosm in relations to macrocosm - the union of *Siva and Sakti* could be achieved within the human body. There were two ways to achieve this end: one was through sexo-yogic practices and the other through awakening the *Kundalini* lying dormant at the base of the human body.

The first way through which human sexual union is transformed by *yoga* is called *maithuna* - the sex act. The Tantrikas did not consider sex merely in the context of procreation and physical gratification. They held the view that when it was sublimated sex could be a great spiritual and psychic force. The true *maithuna* was the consummation of a very difficult apprenticeship under the guidance of a *Guru*. The neophyte had to undergo a continuous uninterrupted mental and physical training. This training consisted of control of mind, breathing through mastering the technique of *pranayama* and a total and absolute control of the flow of semen. This discipline ensured the retention of sexual energy in both partners.

When the practitioner was ready the ritual was performed with a female partner who was considered the embodiment of *Sakti* and the adept had to assume an attitude of complete surrender to her. After a prolonged rituals and uttering of prescribed *mantaras* and other ritual acts the actual sex act was performed without ejaculation of the semen. If by chance orgasm occurred, the adept was trained to withdraw the fluid into his own body by a *yogic* technique known as *vajrolimudra*. The accumulated orgasmic energy transmuted the sex force into a potency so great that the adept reached a state of samadhi - a state where the self-actualisation could enable the adept in the attainment of supernatural powers or *siddhis*.

The second way was through a yogic technique known as *Hatha Yoga*. The Tantrists believed the female or *Sakti* as a source of physical and spiritual energy. It was their notion that *Sakti*, as latent power, lay coiled like a snake at the base of the spine. It is called *Kundalini*. According to the Tantric mystic physiology the body's vital energy is controlled from separate spinal centres known

as *chakras*. These are ranged in ascending order along an invisible spinal nerve or a tube called *susmana* that runs through the spine past six of these centres, *cakaras*, of increasing psychic power; the top most of which is just under the upper skull and is called *sahasrara* pictured as a lotus of a thousand petals and " bright with the brightness of ten million suns".

The aim of the adept is to awaken the *kundalini* and bring it through these centres up to *sahasrara* at the crown of the head by *Yogic* means. Therefore an adept *(Sadhika)* had to perform certain spiritual and physical exercises on his own body transforming it's normal, chaotic state into a cosmos by yoking together of the macro and microcosm within his own individual body. In other words, it was the body which had to be activated and sublimated without which the supra-illumination resulting from the awakening of *kundalini* could not be reached.

In the process of awakening the *kundalini*, it is said that the metabolic processes are highly accelerated and inner processes of brain building take place until conciseness is completely transformed and a superior mind is born which is capable of conferring *siddhis*, or extraordinary powers, on the adept. The lives of some famous *Natha* saints who were masters of this kind of *yoga* give a glowing account of their supra human occult powers. It is reported by Gopi Krishna, a practising *Sadhaka*, that during this biological process the male testicles produce enormous quantities of semen which is transferred to the brain through the spinal canal to provide the most powerful nerve food to the vital parts of the brain.[6].

In this connection the symbol of the erect male organ of generation - *urdahava-retas* - as depicted on the Harappan seal representing a horned god makes enormous sense. Here the divinity's heals are sandwiched between the thighs and the crotch so as to put pressure on the perineum - the point between the scrotum and anus for the easy flow of the animal energies - the streaming up of the reproductive essence for affecting transformation of consciousness. In the mythology and folklore of Tantrism it is said that *Hatha Yoga* was invented by *Guru Gorakhnath* but the aforementioned seal shows that it had originated in the Harappa civilisation.

Karmarmakar has suggested that *kundalini* seems to have been

derived from the Tamil word *kudalai*[7] . This confirms, if any confirmation was at all required, that *Yoga* owes its inspiration to Dravido-Austric inspiration. There may be some degree of correspondence in some Vedic rites connected with sacrifice and *yoga* but it would be a mistake to exaggerate this degree of correspondence and in point of fact much that is characteristic and essential of *Yoga* is lacking in early Vedic literature. There are some hints in the Rg Veda that silence, solitude, continence and fasting etc are conducive to some kind of a magical potency which have a superficial resemblance to *Yogic* practices and these are usually referred to as *Tapas*.

This word was subsequently used in relation to the *Yoga* contemplation and its use in this sense in the Vedic literature may reflect the emergence of the older Harappan religion due to the presence of non-Aryans, such as *Vratyas* and *Munis* who were an ancient order of wandering ascetics active on the fringes of Aryan society from very early times and had knowledge of *Yoga*. Rg Veda (X.136) describes the long haired *Munis* who had obtained paranormal capacities. The Vedic literature also describes *Vratayas* indulging in strange breathing exercises and assuming unusual bodily postures. These *Munis* and *Vratyas* had brought changes in the Vedic language, learnt the language of the Aryans teaching their own secrets in turn to the Aryan priests.

There can be differences over details but it is difficult to doubt the Harappan character of *Yoga*. This is proved by the discovery at the Harappan sites of seals showing figures in what has been interpreted as *yoga* postures. This would suggest a prehistoric root of *Yogic* practices which were later brought together in a systematic philosophy. In addition to the plastic representation of a *yogin* in a horned head dress which was discovered at Mohenjodaro, many other representations of humans or divine beings in the *asana* posture-perhaps practicing *ekagrata* - have also been found. Thus *Yoga*, like Tantrism, is a contribution of the Harappa Civilization and was adopted and valorized by all later religious movements in India [8]

References

1. Mircea Eliade - Shamanism - Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy - Princeton University Press 1964.
2. Joseph Campbell - Masks of God - Primitive Mythology - p.241.

Viking Press 1970

3. Roger M. Walsh - The Spirit of Shamanism - Jeremy P.Tarcher - Los Anglese 1990.
4. Edeltrand Harzer - Encyclopedia of Religion = p.49 Vol.13 - Ed.M.Eliade
5. Gopi Krishna - The Biological Basis of Religion and Genius - Harper & Row, New York 1972 - p.79.
6. ibid - p.9
7. A.P.Karmarkar - Religions of India Vol.2.
8. Mircea Eliade - Yoga- Immortality & Freedom - Princeton University Press 1969 - p.359.

Sankhya : The Beginning of the Indian Pessimism

6

1. Sankhya is the Oldest School of Hindu Philosophy

The philosophic system *Sankhya*, which is the foundational system of all Indic philosophy, provides a basic theoretical exposition of the human condition, enumerating and defining its components, analysing their manner of co-operation in the state of bondage and describing their state of disentanglement or separation. It attempts to discern the causal principles underlying the structure of the universe, to trace back the chain of evolution and finally to achieve liberating knowledge through understanding the difference between matter (*prakrity*) and spirit (*purusha*).

It is the oldest system of Indian philosophy. Kautilya in his *Arthasastra* informs us that during his times, which should be the 4th century B.C.E, there were only three systems of philosophy commonly known These were *Sankhya, Yoga and Lokayata.* That means that the other systems of Hindu philosophy such as *Nayya, Vaisesika, Mimansa* and *Vedanta* were not at that time in any kind of systematic formulation. But the *Sankhya*, though not in its classical form but in its primitive formulation, is even much older than the times of *Arthasastra.*

Sankhya is a genuine philosophy in that it is not a commentary or exposition of Vedic or any other kind of speculations. The antiquity of this philosophic system is proved by the fact that whereas other systems of Hindu philosophy quote doctrines and terminology of *Sankhya*, only *Sankhya* does not refer to any previous authority or texts including the Vedas.

In contrast to the belief of the Judaic religions the people of the ancient world did not subscribe to the idea that something could be created out of nothing. To them creation *ex nihilo* was unacceptable. They believed that the entire universe with its gods.

men and women and every thing in it was created out of matter which was sacred and of divine nature. Moreover, they believed that this sacred matter was a female, a divine mother. In the West Asian myth of creation, *Enuma Elish,* which was a Babylonian version of the ancient myth of Sumero-Akkadian provenance, this divine mother was *Tiamat.* She was conceived of as a formless watery mess without any definition or identity that had existed from all eternity. It was god *Marduk* who shaped the universe and everything in it from this formless matter.

The Harappans, as mentioned earlier, prior to assuming their particular Indic identity had been a part of the West Asian spiritual and religious matrix. It is therefore not surprising that the basic doctrine of Sankhya too is that the whole manifest world is created by the association or proximity of two diverse principles - *Prakriti* which is matter that had existed from all eternity, and *Purusa* which is pure consciousness. And that without this association between the two there would be no worldly existence or human experience.

Jacobi held the view that *Sankhya* was originally the development of a materialistic philosophy current in India from very ancient times. This materialistic background was, as we have seen, provided by Tantrism. The fundamental theoretical concepts of Tantrism are based on the union of male and female, or *Siva* and *Sakti,* where the male is immobile and all the activity is on the side of *Sakti.* This schema of Tantrism is visible in *Sankhya* philosophy on both the mythological and metaphysical planes when it explains the process of creation in terms of union of nature (*Prakriti*) and soul (*Purusa*) wherein *Purusa* is static and it is *Prakriti* that is responsible for all the creative activity.

The term *Prakriti,* as used in Tantrism, stood for the female principle. It follows, then, that *Sankhya* in its early stage of development followed the Tantric way of viewing the cosmic process of creation and dissolution in terms of human birth and death. It was much later, when this philosophy was systematised, that the concept of *Prakriti* was expressed in abstract terms. Original Tantrism was purely materialistic and there was no place in it for God. Similarly *Sankhya* philosophy was atheistic: it being a doctrine of the First Cause being non-sentient matter - *Prakriti.*

In fact in the ancient Indian philosophical tradition, *Sankhya* philosophy has been termed as the godless doctrine of primordial matter. According to D.B Chatopadhya "Original *Sankhya* was a more explicit statement of the theoretical assumptions implicit in Tantrism"[1].

This system was also intimately connected with the ancient discipline of *Yoga*. Whereas *Sankhya* is a theoretical exposition of the human condition, its bondage and release, *Yoga* deals specifically with the dynamics of release or *moksha* and spells out the techniques for gaining it. In the Hindu philosophic tradition *Sankhya* and *Yoga* are therefore considered as twins: two aspects of a single discipline. All the doctrines of *Sankhya* on cosmology, physiology, psychology and above all the doctrine of emancipation have been seamlessly adopted by *Yoga*. We read in the Bhagvat Geeta, "Only fools, but not the wise, speak of *Sankhya* and *Yoga* as two distinct disciplines. Resorting to even one of them steadfastly a person can win the fruits of both. The goal reached by the followers of *Sankhya* can also be reached by those who follow the path of *Yoga*. Therefore. *Sankhya- Yoga* in reality is one discipline"[2]

We have seen in the previous chapters that both *Yoga* and Tantrism formed a basic fabric of Harappa religion and therefore the roots of *Sankhya* philosophy can be traced to that civilisation which makes it the oldest system of Indic thought.

A common observation about Hinduism is that it hangs between two opposite poles - life affirming and life negating principles. The former represents the view that this world is real and that the human body is an epitome of the universe - a microcosm in relation to macrocosm. It believes that it is possible to understand the mystery of nature through the human body. The latter principle believes this world and the existence in it to be a source of pain and suffering to which all human beings are condemned.

This school of thought believes that all matter, the human body in particular, is vile and an hindrance in achieving salvation. It believes that salvation can be obtained only through complete renunciation of this material world and destroying the will to live by austerities, self torture and meditation and *yoga*.

The first school of thought is represented by Tantrism, *Lokayata* and a school of materialists collectively called *Charvakas*. The second school of thought is represented by Jainism, Buddhism, Ajivikas and a host of minor school that cropped up round about the second half of the first millennium B.C.E. It is with these sects that the philosophy of world negation began its great offensive. They are all permeated with fatalistic despair, resignation and a loathing of life. Their main theme was that life was full of sorrow and one must escape the endless cycle of *samsara*, that is from the vortex of birth, death and rebirth and *karma*.

All these philosophies of negation are off shoots of *Sankhya* and therefore it would not be wrong to say that, being the oldest system of philosophy, the *Sankhya* system, was the first to introduce pessimism or a philosophy of despair, pain and suffering in the domain of the entire Indic thought. This philosophy is founded on the premise that worldly existence is full of suffering and that this suffering is caused by celestial misery, that is, misery caused by one's previous *karma*, terrestrial misery caused by nature and from inner organic misery. It is also the first Indian philosophy that suggested ways and means to find release from this state. Joseph Campbell has traced the beginning of this absolute dismissal of the physical world to the Harappan civilisation.[3]

In addition to the fact of misery being the concomitant of existence, the concepts of soul, reincarnation and *karma* are fundamental constituents of *Sankhya* philosophy. These categories in their totality are called *Sansara*. There is not a single Hindu, Buddhist or Jaina text which challenges the concept of *Sansara*. They all accepted it as self evident doctrine that needed no further process of reasoning or demonstration to make it any plainer. To them and to the subsequent generations of Hindu scholars and devotees the doctrine is as true as the day follows night and night day. For such an idea to incubate, mature and culminate in an ineluctable law of nature must have required millennia of intellectual effort. The question now is how did the ancient thinkers conceive these concepts?

The answer to the Indic pessimism lies imbedded in pre-history that has been shaped by geography and ecology that is peculiar to the Indian subcontinent. Physical environments determine the pattern of living and this in turn moulds ideas, faith, spirituality

and social systems. Before we look at the ecological circumstances that led to the loathing of the material world we have to trace the origin of the concept of soul and transmigration which form such an integral part of *Sankhya* formulations.

2. The Concept of Soul Inhabiting All Things

This vision of *samsara* is lost in the vast abyss of Harappan times and beyond. Human kind has from an unknown antiquity entertained the idea that a non-physical entity existed separately from the physical body which was an insubstantial human image that could neither be seen nor touched but it possessed the personal consciousness and volition of its corporeal owner, past or present. It had the capacity of leaving the body of its host and move swiftly from place to place. It could glide or fly in the air and do things which a normal human being couldn't do. There is a scholarly consensus that the primitive mankind conceived the idea of soul from dreams.

When a person who has, during his waking hours, been subject to all kinds of sensory experiences lies down at night, his body becomes inert though breathing. He can neither see, nor hear nor move from his bed. Yet something strange happens: he starts dreaming and he begins to see, hear and move and often embarks on extraordinary adventures, travelling immense distances from his body, meeting friends and relations who passed away long time ago. When he wakes up he can recall most of these adventures and yet finds that he had not moved from his bed. Thus he conceives that something akin to his own personality, which resides within his own body, leaves at night and roams about at will. This substance, he feels, is his soul.

For example, certain primitive tribes of Greenland consider that the soul leaves the body in the night and goes out hunting and dancing and visiting friends and relatives at distant places. As Tylor has remarked, "the ghost or phantasm seen by the dreamer is an insubstantial form, like a shadow, or reflection, and thus the familiar term of the *shade* comes in to express the soul."[4] Thus many primitives tribes such as Algonquins, Zulus, Abipones, etc from various parts of the world have words to describe the soul which mean *shade* or *shadow*.

At the same time the primitive humanity believed that the soul was the cause of life and resided in some part of the body - generally heart or the liver. Death occurs when this spark leaves the body. However, as the dead person appeared to his relations and friends in dreams or visions, the primitives believed that the souls were indestructible, continued to exist even after they were separated from the body by death, and lived forever. This accounts for the universal belief, even amongst the higher religions, that the soul substance is immortal. It persists and returns to haunt the living or is reborn.

The primitive humanity felt a kinship with the animals. They had observed that the animals shared with the humans in the phenomena of life and death. They also bore features such as eyes, mouths, legs etc, common to humans. They hunted for food and reared their offspring like humans. They also had voices in which they could, as the primitives believed, communicate with each other. They could also be seen in dreams by the human beings. Animals were thus considered as close relatives of humans. It was therefore quite logical for the primitive humanity to allow the existence of souls to the beasts as to men.

It has been reported by the ethnologists that primitive tribes all over the world believed that every beast had a soul and that this soul had a future life. Many a tribesman before killing an animal sought its forgiveness. Another corollary of the animals having souls was that domestic animals such as a horse, a cow or a pig etc was killed when its owner died so that the beast's soul may serve its master in the hereafter. From this point onwards the primitive humanity did not find it difficult or outrageous to extend the concept of soul to the plants world as well.

As Tylor has said," in the lower ranges of cultures, at least within one district of the world, the souls of plants are much more fully identified with the souls of the animals."[5] This particular district of the world is the tropical culture zone extending from South Amērica through Africa, India, Southeast Asia and ending in the islands of the Indian and Pacific oceans. The Dayaks of Borneo held the view that rice plants had souls and therefore they could fall sick and die. The Dayaks therefore celebrated feasts to make the rice spirit stay healthy within the rice plant. The Karens of Burma likewise used chants to bring healthy spirit to their rice crop.

Clearly, the notion of a soul animating man, beast and plant was firmly ingrained in the human mind at the lowest level of culture. The question at this point is what led the primitive man to envisage a more "permanent tenancy of souls for successive lives in successive bodies" or simply put what led to the concept of transmigration of souls? Unfortunately there is no simple and clear cut answer. Perhaps mankind afraid of its own mortality had created this concept; a modicum of something truly and dependably enduring, amidst the frailty and impermanence inherent in all forms of phenomenal existence where a human being is born and dies, flowers bloom and wither away, and even the mighty mountains erode away in time. Primitive man had already accepted that soul was immortal and therefore the next logical step was to endow it with the capacity to live again and again in successive bodies. This idea of reincarnation was very comforting in that the possibility of rebirth conferred a wider horizon to life and made the fear of death bearable. Or this concept could have arisen in connection with or an imitation of the repetitive, cyclical nature of the plant life.

Primitive gardeners of the tropical culture zone must have observed that plants and their fruits withered, died, and fell on to earth to be reborn again in the great seasonal round. By the same analogy they came to believe that humans too after death were reborn and passed into some other body. Belief in reincarnation, if not wiped out by the incursion of Christianity and Islam, exists in every primitive tribe inhabiting every part of the world. For example, Poso Alfur of the Celebes island of Indonesia, the Bavanada, Yorubas, Zulus and many other tribes of Africa, the Arandas and others of Australia, Tlingit Eskimos of Alaska and some other Eskimo tribes of Greenland, dozens of tribes of American Indians, the aboriginal tribes of India, still believe that when a person dies the soul seeks a new resting place or another human body. It is matter of common observance that some children and adults bear an uncanny resemblance to their dead relatives.

To the primitives such family resemblance in successive generation appeared to be due to the use of same soul stuff. And this led the early humanity to believe that souls were reborn in new bodies. In any case the concept of transmigration of souls is of common occurrence in primitive communities all over the world. Some aboriginal tribes of India such as khonds and Santhals etc believe

that the new born babies carry the souls of their ancestors. Amongst the Khonds a fowl is sacrificed to the spirit of an ancestor to ask him to enter a new-born child. Seven days later, when the birth is celebrated, tribe's witch-doctor following elaborate methods devised to find out what particular ancestor has returned gives the new-born child the name of that ancestor. Prior to the impact of the Europeans, the Yorubas, a Nigerian tribe, named a new born male child *Babatunde* meaning "Father has returned" Similarly a girl baby was called *Yetunde* - "Mother has returned". And like the khonds of India the Yorubas also looked for the signs as to which ancestor had returned.

Not long ago it was the custom among Hurons, a north American Indian tribe, to bury their dead children along the roadside so that their souls might enter into mothers passing by, so be born again. A detailed account of human reincarnation comes from the traditions of the natives of the Trobriand islands. The natives believe that when a person dies his *baloma* (spirit) goes to live in a nearby island of Tuma. After an initial period of mourning and grieving for the loved ones left behind the *baloma* settles down to a life as close to the one it had led before its death. When it grows old its skin becomes wrinkled and the teeth fall out it goes to the sea shore and washes itself in sea water. It sloughs its old skin and turns into a *waiwaia*, an embryo.

Then a *baloma* woman picks this *waiwaia* in a plaited coconut leaf basket and inserts it into the womb of some woman through the vagina. The *baloma* is then reborn as a human being. All this of course happens in the mythic time and not in real time.[6]

The primitive races made no distinction between the beasts and men and considered them as their close relatives. Hume has observed that," there is an universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted and of which they are intimately conscious."[7] As such once the idea of transmigration of souls from one body to another new-born body was accepted it was not hard for them to extend the same concept of transmigration of human souls to the animals, plants and even to the inanimate objects. Tylor has reported that the Ahts of Vancouver Island firmly believed that the soul of their dead entered the bodies of animals.

Similarly, Powhatan , a North America Indian tribe, would not hurt certain kind of small birds as they believed that these birds contained the souls of their dead chiefs. [8]. At the same time the idea of a law of retribution was germinating in the minds of the primitive people. For example, certain African tribes believed that the souls of bad men were reborn as jackals, and of good men as snakes.

The snakes as it turned out were the favourite revered animals of those tribes. On the other hand the Icannas of Brazil thought their bad men were reborn as reptiles whereas the good ones were reborn as beautiful birds who fed on sweet fruits. The Santhal tribes of India believe that bad men and childless women are eaten eternally by worms and snakes whereas the good ones enter into fruit-bearing trees. Ms. D.Amaury Talbot in her book "Woman's Mysteries in Primitive Culture" has provided many a case history, gleaned by her from the subjects of her research , of how incidents and actions in previous lives had repercussions on the present.

The idea of reincarnation was, in some form or other, taken over from these primitive sources by almost all the higher cultures of antiquity. The Egyptians mummified the bodies of their dead in the belief that the soul of the dead would return in some distant future to inhabit those bodies. The ancient Greek Orphic mystery religion held the view that the soul survived death and was reincarnated in other bodies. It also held the view that soul could achieve release from the cycles of birth, death and rebirth to regain its former pure state. The great Greek philosopher Plato too believed in an immortal soul that was subject to frequent incarnations. Reincarnation also formed a fundamental concept of the religion known as Manichaeism.

In view of the current teachings, precepts and practices of Judaic religions it would appear that the idea of reincarnation was not a part of the religions that arose in the Levant. To the contrary the people of Levant were quite familiar with pre-existence of souls. There is a passage in the New Testament (John 9: 1-2) which states," As Jesus passed by, he saw a man *blind from birth*(italics added). And his disciples asked Him, "Rabbi who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?". Even a cursory examinations of the disciple's question would indicate that it implied that the man had lived before and had sinned and thus

was born blind in his current life. Jesus and his disciples were all Jews. The implication of the Jewish disciple's question would therefore suggest that the Jewish world was not unaware of the theory of reincarnation and the law of retribution imbedded in it. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, both the Essenes and the Pharises believed in reincarnation.

In fact the theory of reincarnation was greatly developed in the Jewish sacred writings known as *Cabala.* In its present form the *Cabala* can be dated to about 1000 C.E. but traditionally it is considered much older. Those who accepted its authority believed that it contained the hidden wisdom behind the Old Testament. For centuries the *Cabala* was widely regarded as the true Jewish theology. The Hebrew word for incarnation is *Gilgul.* A Jewish scholar, Rabbi Manasseh Ben Israel, who lived in England during the times of Oliver Cromwell, had this to say about the doctrine of *Gilgul,*" The doctrine of the transmigration of souls is a firm and infallible truth accepted by the whole assemblage of our religion with one accord so there is none to be found who would dare to deny it. Indeed there are great number of sages in Israel who hold firm to this doctrine as the fundamental part of our religion".

The *Cabala* held sway amongst the Jewish people till the end of 18th century. However, with the dawn of the 19th century Jewish scholars influenced by the agnosticism and scepticism prevailing in the new scientific age degraded the *Cabala* in an effort to give Judaism a rationalistic tone.

The doctrine of reincarnation could not make any headway in the mainstream Christianity. The early Christians were much too much preoccupied with the imminent end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ. They had no interest in speculations concerning pre-existence of soul and its reincarnation. It is only when the world did not end as per their expectations that they began to wonder what happened after death. Gnosticism, an early Christian sect strongly believed in reincarnation. In the manner of Indian philosophy it viewed matter as evil and the spirit good. It believed that soul could be freed from the clutches of matter and the round of births by esoteric knowledge. However, by the first century C.E. Gnosticism was branded an heresy and the Church worked hard to suppress it. With the Conversion of Roman Emperor Constantine to Christianity, the militant Church was

able to extirpate it completely by the edict of the Council of Nicaea called by the Emperor in 325 C.E. Even so, many distinguished thinkers throughout the Christian centuries have accepted it either openly or secretly, when such a belief invited the wrath of the Church in the form of ostracism and the stake.

As to the third monotheistic religion, Islam, the Koran is silent on this subject but there are some minor Muslim sects who believe in the doctrine of metempsychosis. These are the various off shoots of the Isma'ilis such as the Druses, and the Bohras. The great Persian mystic poet Jalal-ud-din Rumi also believed in and taught this doctrine.

With the dawn of a new millennium in sight it appears that there is a renewed interest in the phenomenon of reincarnation and *karma* in the West. The names of eminent intellectuals, philosophers and poets of the West who have in the past century or so accepted the doctrine of transmigration is a veritable roll of honour. However, it is in India that this tradition of primitive humanity was nurtured and developed so that even to this day it remains a fundamental concept in all her philosophical, religious and metaphysical thought. This happened because of the fact that India remained singularly devoid of any so called revealed religion which could queer the pitch for the natural development of its own spiritual heritage. By the time she came in contact with the revealed religions of the West, she had fully worked out her religious sensibilities.

Starting from the Neolithic Age Indian population has predominately been of Austric origin. They formed the majority of the denizens of the Harappa civilisation and their descendants are represented not only by the existing aboriginal tribes but also the masses of the so called depressed classes of Hindu society. Lest we forget, the Austric tribes were a part of the primitive humankind that had immigrated from the culture cradle of Southeast Asia and Micronesia to populate the Indian sub-continent. The Indian sub-continent, except for its north western parts, is ecologically similar to that tropical culture zone. Therefore, everything said above about the beliefs in transmigration and law of retribution was a part of their cultural baggage too.

As Chatterjee had observed, "It is more than plausible that the

Austric ideas about the soul of man after death furnished one of the main bases in the conception of *sansara* or transmigration."[9] These beliefs, as stated above, were further developed on the Indian soil. The law of retribution in particular was developed on the Indian soil as it, in its finished form as the doctrine of *Karma*, is found nowhere else. The *Karma* in this context denotes the impersonal and transethical system under which one's current situation in the world is regarded as the *fruit* of the *seeds* planted by one's behaviour and disposition in the past, and the view that in all of one's present actions lie similar *seeds* that will have continuing and determinative effect on one's life as they bear *fruit* in the future.

Both seed and fruit above have been italicised for the reason that some scholars have seen in their usage in the description of the theory of *karma* evidence of an ecology and value system that knows that a well-planted garden yields good crops and that the land will give birth repeatedly to good fruits if healthy seeds find in it a place to take hold and grow.

In other words, the theory that as you sow so shall you reap was contribution of the pre-Harappan peoples of the land. We have now discovered the source of notions such as the soul, transmigration and *karma*. We have now to find the cause and source of that great loathing for life which has clouded the Indian thought for thousands of years.

3. The Vagaries of Nature & its Consequences

Human beings as hunters, gatherers and even early agriculturists had to come face to face with their natural environment which consisted of various natural and geographical phenomenon such as ice sheets, deserts, heat, dust, storms, floods, drought, pestilence and what have you.

The nature could cause famine and starvation and could spread pestilence in one form or the other to wipe out whole communities and nations. Nature in the form of geography, climate, diet etc can not only leave a physical imprint but also can be a determinative influence on the ideological superstructure of a society. Throughout history human have been tied closely to their environment and have been at the mercy of nature. Civilisations

and cultural development have been greatly affected by their environment. .

In India the nature has always been capricious and worked on a huge scale. Human beings have always been at its mercy. This is as true to-day as it was in ages gone by. With the exception of the Himalayan regions and a fringe of northern plain jutting out of the Himalayan foothills, India has basically two seasons: one of savage unremitting heat and sunlight and the other of one of monsoons for a period of 4 months in a year.

During the long hot summer India is like an oven in which huge dust storm perform their devilish dance. Dust is so pervasive that it enters every nook and cranny, even one's ears and nose and in between the teeth. It chafes the skin and inflames the eyes. The earth is baked and practically all vegetation dies. It is so hot that, as an aboriginal proverb goes, "even the urine of cows dries up before it reaches the ground". In such a superheated atmosphere even breathing is difficult. Water gradually becomes a very scarce commodity.

Most of India's mighty rivers shrink and turn into miserable puddles. Women in the villages have to go longer and longer distance each day to fetch a pitcher of brackish water. The unremitting heat saps mental activity and energy, fatigues the body and weakens its resistance to disease. Adults and children alike suffer from prickly heat. Human beings fall an easy prey to the dread diseases. Animals such cows. goats and sheep etc which are the economic mainstay of many a village community are subjected to untold sufferings and quite a few die during these hot miserable months.

Then come the monsoons that cool the air, slake the thirst of the parched earth with life giving water and cover it with a green mantel. The rivers, lakes and reservoirs start bubbling again and there are songs of rain in the air. But all that is not hunkey-dory. Inadequate housing, generally made of mud, give hardly any protection against the lashing rains. During the rainy season extreme humidity turns salt and sugar watery, articles like shoes, clothing etc become mouldy. The diseases like cholera. malaria and dysentery become endemic.

The monsoon is also a very capricious phenomenon. It can bring vast devastation in its wake. Rivers and lakes overflow and flood the land. Fair-weather roads, which is all that rural India has, disappear and villages are completely cut off from the rest of the world. The fury of the floods sweeps away every thing, humans, their dwelling and domestic animals too. Years of hard labour is swept away in one fell blow. At other times rains are late or insufficient. Then the crops wither, animals die, famine grips the land, and starvation and death in millions is the outcome of that failure of the Monsoons. Even modern technology has not so far been able to subdue the fury of nature in modern India. We moderns with all our comforts and security cannot visualise how extraordinarily difficult it was for those primitive communities of hunters, food gatherers and early agriculturist to exist from season to season or sometime from day to day. Their life was a constant struggle to ward off death from hunger, pestilence, vagaries of nature and wild animals

Religious systems and their components are, in the final analysis, an expression of the respective ecological circumstances. The simple ethnic cultures, such as that of the present day Australian bushmen, the New Guinea tribes or the archaic Austrics of prehistoric India, take their religious themes from their ecological milieu and as such their religions are no more than a ritualisation of their ecology. Down the unrecorded centuries, the unpredictable and perilous nature of the Indian ecology must have driven some souls, sensitive to the sufferings the people did nothing to deserve, to the abysses of despair and dismay.

The message they received from their ecological milieu was that life was disastrous and not worth living. This loathing of life along with the notions of soul, its transmigrations and its being subject to the inexorable law of *Karma*, constituted the warp and weft of the concept of *Sansara* and must have become quite ancient by the time Harappa civilisation began to flower. It was further honed by the Harappans's own experience of their ecological circumstances.

4. Economic Poverty

Although the core region in which this civilisation was born was well watered by the mighty Indus and the now extinct Sarawati

with their combined tributaries of the Punjab rivers, it remained a vast desert. In 1956 I flew over the Nile from Khartoum to Cairo and from the air the landscape, except for a green strip along the banks of the river, looked very much like a moonscape where not a sheaf of grass grew. Thousands of years ago the Harappan landscape must have presented a similar picture.

In that relentless dessert the summer temperatures could and do rise to 120 degrees F in the shade. The soil is salty and the relentless summer heat bakes the plain and the salt rises to the surface of the land. so that, as Stuart Piggot has put it," it has a brittle shiny crust that crushes beneath the step like a satanic mockery of snow"[10]. Moreover, the land was subject to tectonic upheavals.

Recent studies show that during Harappan times these upheavals combined with silting changed the course of rivers in that region. Satluj river of the Punjab, which was a tributary of the Saraswati, shifted westward and joined the Indus. It increased the flow of water in the Indus which then moved eastward. This resulted in frequent flooding of many a Harappam settlement. Mohenjodaro escaped this fate as it was protected by massive walls and dikes. But it had to pay a heavy price to stay afloat. Various levels of silt accumulated in the city of Mohenjodaro show that such floodings may have occurred five or six times. Some floodings were long lasting sometime extending to decades. Every time such a flooding occurred people had not only to build huge dikes to protect their city but also their dwelling on the top of their old submerged homes to raise them above the flood level.

Such frequent rebuilding activities at Mohenjodaro and other settlements must have exhausted the empire's resources, sapped the people's energy and will to survive. In the end, as Dale suggests " not only the Harappan prosperity but also the Harappan spirit was mired in an unrelenting sequence of invading waters and engulfing silt".

Added to these natural disasters was the economic poverty of the Harappa Civilisation that further exacerbated the misery of its inhabitants. The origins of this civilisation are rooted in the village culture of the Baloch hills and the Indus plains. This pre-Harappan age based on primitive agriculture lasted at least four thousand

years. Scattering of archaeological finds provide evidence of the unremitting work and struggle waged by the early agriculturists to eke out a precarious and difficult existence from the tiny plots of land in the hills and valleys of Balochistan where it all began. Even After the coming together of these villages into a larger unit of an urban civilisation the circumstances of the people did not improve to any great extent.

The Harapans like the Sumerian lacked in natural resources. There was no timber, stones, metals and minerals all of which had to be acquired from far away places. The backbone of this civilisation was agriculture which was, as it appears, confined to the flood plains of the Indus. Aerial photography has not revealed any tell tale signs of canals or any kind of irrigation ditches. Besides, due to scarcity of metals the agricultural implements were made of stone. This method of cultivation would not have brought in large enough crops to feed not only the families of the farmers but also non-food producers such as the administrators, priests, landlords, traders, potters, weavers and the like.

The Harappan's was no more than a subsistence economy and this too was subject to periodic flooding, referred to above, which time and again dealt a devastating blow to the agricultural foundations and the economic structure of the empire. Thus there was not enough economic surplus to go around for building magnificent temples, sumptuous palaces and other works of arts. Unlike Egypt and Sumer no tombs filled with material wealth have been found throughout the valleys of the Indus and now extinct Saraswati rivers. The graves were simple burials and there was hardly any difference between the graves of the rich and the poor.

It is for this reason that whereas the artefacts recovered from archaeological sites in Mesopotamia and Egypt fill the museums all over the world, the findings at all the Harappan sites on the other hand could fill no more than a few old style travelling trunks. As William McNeill has so pertinently observed," From a distance India looked wealthy, since its exports were gems and spices, but inspite of that reputation it seems likely that the subcontinent as a whole was always comparatively poor inasmuch as a rather slender margin existed in most times and places between what an average peasant family could produce and what it needed for

survival"[13]. The economic conditions prevailing in the Harappan countryside would have been no different from what they are now in some of the depressed areas of Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa.

Finally, tired and beaten by their own environments the Harappans, in a despondent and broken spirit migrated to other parts of India such as Gujerat, Rajasthan and eastern Punjab. Even in their new stations they did not escape the vagaries of the mother nature. On the evidence of paloeo- botanical analysis, G. Sing had suggested in a paper published in 1971 that conditions in the entire Harappa domain had turned from humid to dry[11]. Harvey Weiss, Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at Yale, has now come out with evidence that shows that some four thousand years ago a drought of such magnitude occurred in West Asia that it lasted for over 300 years and destroyed half a dozen Bronze Age cultures from the Mediterranean to the Indus Valley [12].

The Harappa Civilisation right from the beginning was inured to conditions of uncertainty, powerlessness in face of cruel environment and scarcity of material goods. This sense of helplessness must have inculcated in the minds of the people a desire to quit this transitory and imperfect world in favour of a far off dream world. The priests, thinkers and teachers of the mature Harappa age were literate, and hence capable of creative thinking and formulating coherent philosophic principles based on what their physical environment and cultural memory had provided them. They articulated this legacy of misery and helplessness in a philosophy of transcendentalism: escape from the shackles of mundane life through self-abnegation and asceticism.

They enjoined upon their followers to eschew all kinds of pleasures, lead a penurious way of life, minimising their material demands in order to obtain a liberating vision. As McNeill has pointed out," the ascetic and other worldly ideals of life were necessary adaptation to the narrower range of material surplus." and he goes on to say that in this philosophy of renunciation, "everything fitted together in mutually supportive fashion to constitute a very effective and enduring adjustment to the special conditions of a civilised life in the Indian subcontinent."[14]

This philosophy of renunciation and transcendentalism goes under the name of *Sankhya* system. As pointed out earlier, it had arisen from the primitive materialism implicit in Tantrism but due to outer pressures exerted by geography and ecology and inner evolution it soon transcended it and engaged itself in solving questions about man's soul and its salvation from cycles of existence. The tyranny of existence and a salvation from the relentless cycle of birth, death and rebirth thus became the leitmotif of this philosophy. It is this philosophic system that for the first time in the history of Indic thought suggested that the normal earth bound condition is based on ignorance and that the highest goal of humanity was salvation from the ever revolving cycle of becoming and decaying through cognition of the difference between the individual and the absolute consciousness.

As we shall discuss in the next chapter, the first Indic religious system based on this philosophy of salvation was also of Harappan origin. We do not know what it was called by its ancient preceptors but we now know it as Jainsim. Its basic teaching was and continues to be that " humanity was no more than the shell to be pierced, shattered, and dismissed" [15]. They therefore preached a doctrine of perfect non-activity in every sphere of existence and severest possible asceticism to achieve liberation from the shackles of *sansara*. In the course of following centuries this mode of thought caught the fancy of the sages and ascetic of all religious denominations and thus became a central theme of the entire Indic thought.

5. Sankhya System is non-Aryan

Our knowledge of this system comes from Isvarkrishna's *Sankhyakarika.* which is said to have been composed sometime in the 4th-5th century C.E, and some late commentaries, as all early literature dealing with this ancient doctrine has been lost. Some of these late texts and commentaries are spurious, if not forgeries, and their aim is to bring this system in line with the *Vedantic* thought. Some scholars have tried to trace the original Sankhya in the *Moksdharma* portion of the Mahabharata and others in the *Upnisadas.* These are mere speculations with hardly anything to support them.

In keeping with the traditions of the other prehistoric societies the Indo-Aryans, and for that matter the entire Indo-Europeans

speaking peoples, had a notion of soul. But none of these peoples had any notion of soul's transmigration and the just deserts according to the *karmic* code that awaited it in its future incarnations. The Rg Veda is completely unaware of the doctrine of *Sansara.* The post Rig Vedic religious literature is much too much contaminated with non-Aryans ideas and therefore is not of much use. The basic ideas of *Sankhya-Yoga* do not belong to the Vedic tradition and in their basic teaching there is no hint of a divine pantheon such as that of the Vedic gods. The introduction of a god in the *Yoga* system by Patanjali is of a much later date and despite the best efforts of that great sage it stands out like a sore thumb never forming a coherent part of the system.

According to Richard Garbe none of the *Sankhya* ideas can be found in the *Brahmanas* and *Aranyakas.* The *Sankhya* doctrines that are found in the didactic passages of the epic Mahabharata and permeate the Bhagavad Gita have been termed by Schweitzer as Brahmanised version of the original doctrine. Even *Vedanta* has been termed by him as Brahmanised *Sankhya*[16] It therefore follows that before it was Brahmanised it must have existed in its original and non-Brahmanical state. In this connection it is relevant to note that a passage in the *Bhagvata Purana* (XXI.26) describes the descent of Kapila, the legendary founder of *Sankhya,* only through the maternal line. It was the Dravidians and other non-Aryans who claimed descent from a female line. This is an added proof that *Sankhya-Yoga* philosophy is rooted in the non-Aryan and non-Vedic world view whose origin goes back to Harappa Civilisation and beyond.

The *Upnisadas,* though inspired by Vedic thought, reflect a type of religion which is very different from the Vedic ritualism. There are scholars who, being bent upon proving that everything in Hindu religion owes its inspiration to the Aryans, believe that the germs of *Sankhya* philosophy are to be found in these Texts. Those texts that are claimed to hold the rudiments of *Sankhya* are *Prasana, Katha, Svetasvatara* and *Maitri* The passage from *Prasana* (IV.8.) is nothing but an enumeration of the *Sankhya* categories of five cosmic elements, ten organs, and *manas, buddhi,* and *ahankara* etc.

These passages show that none of the *Upnisads* had attained the *Sankhya* point of view and no clear basis of *Sankhya* is available

from these texts. At the most they exhibit the influence of some kind of pre-classical *Sankhya* formulations or at least the beginning of such formulations. According to Frauwallner "references to *Sankhya* in *Upnisadas* are limited in value because they stand at some distance from actual *Sankhya* speculations. They are, rather. influenced by the *Sankhya* ideas [17]. The passages in these and other *Upnisadas* show that they had borrowed *Sankhya* terminology for their own end.

For example, *Svetasvatara Upnisada* not only borrowed *Sankhya* ideas but also a pre-Aryan god to weld together the teachings of earlier *Upnisadas* with *Sankhya* theory and *Yoga* practices, into a theistic framework wherein *Siva* combined with Vedic god *Rudra* becomes the First Cause. He becomes the Great Lord *(Mahesvara)* who is the Supreme *Purusha* amongst many *purushas*. One would therefore think that by the time these decidedly later treatises came to be composed the much older *Sankhya* analysis of reality had become more and more acceptable to the orthodox Brahmans whose ranks, were being increasingly filled by non-Aryan *Vratyas* who, according to Larson "contributed certain notions and practices to Brahmanical religion".[18]

According to Hauer many of the *Vratya* groups so inducted into Brahmanical ranks had such names as *Jaiminiyas, Kathas, Maitrayaniyas, Kausitains and Chandogyas* [19] These are the family names of the authors of the *Upnisadas* referred to above. Thus the Brahmanism took *proto-Sankhya and proto-Yoga* doctrines into its bosom from these neo-Brahmins. It is the contention of Zimmer that even the *Advaita Vedanta* of Sankara is influenced by *Sankhya-Yoga* ideologies. He says " the unconditional, illimited state beyond the realm of opposites as described by Sankara in his theory of illusory manifestation reflects, though in a highly spirtualised form, the state of both the ancient Jaina *Kevalin* and the absolutely uninvolved *Purusha* of the Sankhya view"[20].

There can be no connection between the *Upnisadas* and the *Sankhya* system as the former are pantheistic whereas the latter is totally atheistic. *Sankhya* was the philosophy of *prakriti* ,i.e., primordial material as the First Cause whereas to *Upnisads* the First Cause was a spiritual principle. Besides, the idea of release *(moksha)* in the *Sankhya* is totally different from that of the

Upnisads. The former seeks to isolate the life monad or self not only from all things but also from all other monads, The aim of latter on the other hand is to merge the self with the greater Self which is all pervading World Soul or *Brahman*.

Those who seek to find the origin of *Sankhya* in the *Upnisadas* should not forget that Badarayana, the author of *Braham Sutra* or *Vedanta Sutra*, which was the first attempt to systematise the philosophy of the *Upnisadas*, was at great pains to refute the *Sankhya* philosophy which he felt posed the greatest challenge to *Vedanta* System. His *Brahm Sutra* is made up of 555 *sutras* of which 60 are devoted to this refutation. Furthermore, of these 60 sutra almost 37 are devoted to proving that Sankhya was non-Vedic and anti -Vedic

Even the great Sankara who wrote a commentary on the *Brahm Sutra*, called *Sankhya* as *veda virodh, i.e, anti Vedic*. Both Sankara and Ramanuja are said to have thoroughly examined the suspect passages in the *Upnisads* and reached the conclusion that they did not contain any *Sankhya* doctrines.[21] In the circumstances seeking the origin of *Sankhya* in the *Upnisadas*, which are the end of Vedas and source of *Vedanta*, makes no sense at all The essentials of *Sankhya* are rooted in Tantrism and Tantrism in its turn had its roots in Harrapa civilisation.

It took many centuries for the *Sankhya* elements to be developed into a cohesive philosophy. It was perhaps the legendary Kapila who gave it the final shape. As a developed doctrine it was not a part of the Vedic literature but stood apart and parallel to it. In the epic *Mahabharata* it, along with *Yoga*, are mentioned as separate systems from the Vedas. The *Sankhya* philosophy rose in those areas which were least influenced by the Brahmanical traditions and in time inspired the rise of heterodox religions of Buddhism and Jainsim in those areas. And, it influenced the growth of the sects of *Bhagvatas* and *Pasupatas* which played such an important part in turning the Vedic religion into Hinduism. As Garbe has said, "the whole of Indian literature, so far it touches philosophical thought, beginning with the *Mahabharta* and the Law Books of Manu, specially the mythological literature and legendary *Puranas*, has been saturated with the doctrine of Sankhya "[22]

It is worth noting that the notions of soul, transmigration and the law of retribution and renunciation were all devised by primitive humanity based on their own experience and reasoning, howsoever crude, without any supernatural or divine aid. *Sankhya* has remained true to this spirit in that till to-day it has remained an uncompromisingly atheistic philosophy despite efforts being made to bring it in harmony with the *Vendantic* thought. Not only Buddhism and Jainism, which are based on *Sankhya* thought, are atheist, its influence is so pervasive even on Brahamincal thought that except for *Vedanta* all other schools of Brahminic philosophy such as *Nyaya, Vaisesika,* and *Mimansa* can all do very well without a Divine Designer.

Referemces

1. Deviprasad Chattopadhya - Lokayata - Peoples Publishing House New Delhi 1968 - p.422.
2. Bhagvat Gita V.4.5.
3. Joseph Campbell - The Flight of The Gander - Harper Perennial 1990 - p.178.
4. E.B.Tylor - Religion in Primitive Culture - Torch Books New York 1958 - p.14.
5. Ibid. p.59.
6. Bronislaw Malinowsky - Magic Science & Religion - Anchor Books NewYork 1954 - p.149-211.
7. David Hume - The Natural History of Religion.
8. E.B.Tylor - opp.cit. p.92-93.
9. S.K.Chatterji - Cultural Heritage of India - Calcutta 1958 - p.80.
10. Stuart Piggott - Prehistoric India - Penguin Books 1950 - p.67.
11. G. .Singh - Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania 62 - p.177-79.
12. Karen Wright - Empires in the Dust - Discover Magazine - March 1998.

13. William H.McNeill - Plagues & People - Anchor Press New York 1976.= p.93.(For example, the Roman imports from India during historical times consisted mainly of dancing girls, parrots, ebony, ivory, pearls, precious stones, spices and perfumes for which Rome sent enormous quantity of gold to India. It is on record that Pliny the Elder complained bitterly about this gold drain)

14. p.95 ibid.

15. Heinrich Zimmer - Philosophies of India - Princeton 1971 - p.232.

16. Albert Schweitzer - Indian Thought & its Development - The Beacon Press 1971 - p.73.

17 Quoted by Gerald J. Larson - Classical Sankhya - New Delhi 1979 - p.48.

18. Gerald J.Larson - ibid. p.60.

19. Quoted by Gerald J.Larson - ibid. p.59.

20. Heinrich Zimmer - Philosophies of India - Princeton University Press 1971 - p.459.

21. Debiprasad Chattopadhaya - opp.cit. p.376.

22. Richard Garbe - Encyclopedia of Religion & Ethics - Vol. XI. p.189.

Proto - Jainism : World Negation & Doctrine of Sansara come together

7

1. What was the Age of Jaina Saviours?

Jainism is the oldest Indic religious system. The Jainas claim great antiquity for their religion. Mahavira, who was on older contemporary of Buddha, was the 24th and last of the Jaina *Tirthankaras* or Saviours. He was preceded by 23 Saviours. The 23rd Saviour, *Parasvanatha*, appears to be an historical figure as his father was said to be the brother of *Vasudeva*, the father of *Krishna* of Mathura. He is supposed to have lived 250 years before the birth of *Mahavira*. That will take him at least to the 9th century B.C.E as Mahavira's date of birth is said to be 579 B.C.E.. With the 22 Saviours that preceded him we land ourselves in the realm of mythical time.

For example, *Aristamani*, the Saviour before *Parsavanatha*, is supposed to have preceded him by 84.000 years and *Nami* who was before *Aristamani* is placed at 134,000 years B.C.E and *Survata*, the 20th Saviour is placed at 1,234,000 B.C.E. As in the case of Mesopotamian kings and Biblical Patriarchs before the Flood the reckoning of time spans of Jaina Saviours is in mythical time rather than in earthly time. If these Saviours were real human beings with real earthly life spans they could easily reach back to Harappa Culture. It is interesting to note that the first Saviour was called *Rasbhnatha*, a compound word where *Rasbh* means 'Bull" and *Natha* means "Lord". His name therefore meant "Lord Bull".

In Jaina iconography *Rasbhanatha* is represented by a zebu bull. The worship of a zebu bull was, as testified by numerous Harappa seals, quite ubiquitous in that civilisation. Dr Zimmer regarded Jainsim as the oldest religion which could be traced back to the Harappa Culture. This view finds support in Richard Lannoy's observation that "Jaina religious iconography and aesthetics

sensibility, almost certainly of non-Aryan origin, bore a close resemblance to those of the Harappans"[1].

The basic ideas of Jainism do not belong to the Vedic-Brahmanical traditions but are related to the *Sankhya-Yoga* system. The Jainas teaching can be briefly described as follows: Jainism is dualistic in that the life monad *(Jiva)* is regarded as absolutely different from mater *(a-Jiva)* which is called *Karma of six colours* by the Jainas. The *Jiva* is enmeshed in matter and his salvation is to be found by freeing the *Jiva* from the matter so that it may regain its pristine purity and enjoy omniscient self-sufficient bliss for all eternity. This description clearly shows the close resemblance of Jaina teachings with *Sankhya-Yoga* ideology.

It is the contention of Zimmer that *Sankhya-Yoga* together with Jainism and early Buddhism represent the thinking of non-Aryan people of India who could boast of an extremely subtle tradition of their own. According to him "Jainism does not derive from the Brahamin-Aryan sources but reflects the cosmology and anthropology of a much older pre-Aryan origin, being rooted in the same soil of archaic metaphysical speculations as *Sankhya and Yoga*"[2]

Furthermore, Long before the discovery of Harappa culture Jacobi had observed that inspite of divergent growth in later days there were some essential features common to both Jainsim and Buddhism on the one hand and *Sankhya-Yoga* on the other which go back to the primitive currents of religious and philosophical speculations[3]. We now know that the source of these "primitive currents" was Harappa Culture. In Jaina imagery, as seen in contemporary Jaina temples, all the Saviours are depicted as standing erect and immobile with arms held stiffly down. knees straight and toes forward. This *yogic asana* is called *Kayostsarga* or." dismissing the body".

The motif of a nude man in such a *yoga* stance is also found in Harappa seals. It therefore goes to show that the practitioners of this type of austere *Yoga* could have been in the Jaina line of *Tirthankaras*. Then there is a legend, shared both by the Jainas and the Buddhists, where the Saviour at the moment of receiving enlightenment was assailed by the evil spirit *Meghamalin/Mara* with earthquakes, torrential rains and high winds. At that moment

a king cobra and his wife emerged from the bowls of the earth and with their hoods spread sheltered the Lord from either side.

A seal depicting a similar scene has been recovered from the Harappa ruins. The Jaina view of life is essentially materialistic. Jainism in fact looks back to a stage in the evolution of Indian thought when it was impossible to conceive of any entity except on the analogy of solid matter which was thought of as being alive. In the Jaina scheme of things not only human beings, demons and animals possess soul but all plants, earth, stones, winds, fire, rivers. ponds and seas are inhabited by souls as well. Jainas also believe that the soul *(jiva)* like matter has definite, though variable , size and weight. This way of thinking is a legacy of that remote past, discussed in the previous chapter, when primitive humanity conceived the whole universe as a living entity endowed with soul. This once again leads us back to Harappa Culture. It was therefore the Harappan spiritual complex out of which were born the proto philosophies and practices of *Sankhya-Yoga* and Jainism And later these philosophies prepared the ground for the forceful anti-Vedic statement of Mahavira, Buddha and a host of minor thinkers.

2. Jainism too is of Harappan Inspiration

The doctrine of *Karma* and *sansara* originated in the food-gathering and agrarian experience of non-Aryan India as the Aryans, to start with, were cattle herders and breeders and not agriculturists. The concept of *sansara* originated in the Harappa civilisation, the *Sankhya* system developed it and the Jainas were the first to adopt it into their religious ideology. Of all the Indic religions it is Jainism that believes in and maintains an absolute and extreme doctrine of *Karma* - but with a difference. In the other systems of Indic thought *Karma* is regarded as a principle or law of nature but Jainism conceives it as a material substance of six colours. The Jainas believe that *Karma* is a subtle kind of matter that attaches itself to the individual soul *(jiva)*, which becomes receptive to its worldly attachments and that this embodied state of soul is the result of the build up of such *karmic* matter.

Furthermore, all action causes karmic matter to accumulate. Evil deeds produce the grossest type of *karma* which is harder to eradicate. Hence the Jaina Saviours preached an extreme kind of

non-activity in order not to collect any more *karmic* matter good or bad. So primitive and extreme is this Jaina theory of *Karma* that even the Buddhist Pali cannon went to a great deal of thought to refute it. But it is the very primitiveness of this theory that proves its antiquity.

To the Jainas the symbol of the *swastika*, which appears on a number of Harappan seals, is very important. They make it the first of their eight symbols. To them it is the emblematic of a perfect period. The central point *(bindu)* stands for life and the four branches stand for the four conditions of future life, that is, to become a god, go down to hell, be reborn in human form or be born in the body of a lower animal. Here are all the essentials of the doctrine of *sansara* - reincarnation and *karma*. The notion of an impersonal law of cause and effect was, in a modified form, subsequently taken over by the decidedly non-agricultural ideology of Vedic ritualism, Vedanta and sectarian theism.

But that was to come later. Both Jainsim and *Sankhya-Yoga* shared a belief in this doctrine - this life is but one in a chain of lives and that it is determined by an individual's actions in a previous life. This is accepted by them as a law of nature according to which the moral energy of a particular act is preserved and automatically fructifies in the next life. This whole process of *Samsara* has no beginning and no end. It is not a cycle of progress or purification but a matter of perpetual enslavement. This is a mechanical process and even God cannot reverse it.

In the cosmic image of the Jainas the order of time, inspired no doubt by Sumerian analogy, is depicted as a revolving wheel of six ascending *(utsarpini)* and as many descending *(avasarpini)* spokes. Its upward course is under the influence of a good serpent while its downward course is under the influence of an evil one. Each descending spoke represent an age of progressive demerit and each ascending spoke likewise represents an age of progressive merit and the wheel goes on endlessly.

3. Caste System Is Of Jaina/Harappan Origin

The Harappa Civilisation presents a picture of a very conservative but stable society. Of all the civilisations of antiquity only this civilisation shows an almost perfect uniformity, over an empire of the size of some half a million square miles. The remarkable

uniformity of the twin cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and countless smaller sites scattered throughout the Indus valley suggests that a strong central authority and lines of communication were responsible for shaping the experience of the Harappans into a unity touching all aspects of life.

In other civilisations of the ancient world cities and settlements grew up haphazardly around a palace or a temple. But in Harappa civilisation each town and city appears to have been laid out according to a well thought out plan: a west facing high platform on which were built the religious and administrative structures surrounded by housing blocks intersecting on a north-south and east-west gridwork of major thoroughfares. The Harappan houses were of a similar design and even the bricks from which these houses were built were of a uniform size. The tight planning that characterised Harappan cities and housings, was also evident in their commerce which was carried out according to precise and standard weights and measures which never varied in value throughout the Indus region for almost 700 years.

The basic unit was 16 equal to about one-half ounce in value and larger weights were multiples of 16 - 32, 64, 128 and so on. The smaller ones were all fractions of 16. The number 16 survived till the mid-fifties of this century in the Indian currency when 16 annas equalled one rupee. The most remarkable example of Harappan uniformity is their script which remained unchanged through the entire life span of this culture (2600 - 1900 B.C.E). What was the authority that kept this vast society a going concern for almost a millennium?

Archaeologists have failed to discover remains of any royal palaces or administrative building. The so called citàdel mounds at Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Kalibangan appear to be of religious nature rather than military strongholds. Latest excavations at Harappa have revealed that the city was surrounded by a wall without any moat or any sudden turns to ambush an intruding army. Such a wall could provide little defence. This wall was intended to ward off wild animals, flood waters of Ravi and above all to control ingress and egress of trade goods. In these circumstances it could not be a machinery of a state, such as a king or any other kind of potentate who, by the use of force, maintained uniformity, equanimity and order in that vast empire

because the tools of violence, as suggested by Kosambi, found in the Harappa ruins were curiously weak and quite inadequate for obtaining the subservience of a labour class by brute force [4]. Besides, only very few such tools, weak though they were, have been unearthed.

Moreover, no structure of military nature has been discovered. It also appears that the Harappans were in all probability a non violent people. According to Kenoyer the evidence for militarism and military conflicts during the Harappan era is minimal. [5] Numerous seals, inscription, bas-reliefs and stelai have been recovered from the ancient ruins of West Asia and Egypt that speak of and are a monument to the militarism of those nations. They depict scenes of war and violence where the conquerors such as Sargon, his son Rimush and grand son Narim Sin, the Egyptian Ramses and Narmer and the blood thirsty monarchs of Assyria, Asshur-nasir-pal II and Tiglath-pileser, are shown as smiting, beheading or trampling the people conquered by them.

Of the thousands of seals recovered from the Harappan sites not one shows such scenes of violence. In fact the Harappan seals depict in the main scenes of religious worship and objects of that worship. The Harappans, it appears, waged no bloody wars and raised no monuments to their war heroes. They did not have a mighty army nor blood thirsty emperors bent upon conquest. As Harold Watts, referring to the horned deity of Mohenjodaro, has observed." at the centre of nascent (Harappan) pantheon there was no scowling *Marduk* lifting its spear to smite his enemies or no *Zues* like figure handling an Aryan thunderbolt. Rather there was a deity, a little withdrawn from the busy market places of the brick constructed cities; a deity who contemplated matters superior to the temple store houses and the conquest of neighbouring cities, matters that were Mesopotamian pre-occupations of the same period [6]. Jainas, whose religious origins has been traced to Harappan civilisation, remain to this day the most pacific of the Indian peoples. A majority of the modern day Jainas are found in those very areas that were once the southern domain of the Harappa civilisation.

The Harappan empire was in the main confined to the alluvial plains of the valleys of the Indus and its tributaries. It thus lacked in resources such as metals, minerals and wood atc which had to be imported from long distances at considerable expense. History

bears witness to the fact that when a nation is faced with such a resource crunch it invariably chooses a path of aggression to extend its territory and resources. In view of the pacific nature of the Harappan civilisation this mode of operation could safely be ruled out.

The Harappans had therefore to devise alternative means to obtain needed raw materials from distant lands. This was done through trade, exchange, and barter with its neighbours. There is sufficient evidence to show that the Harappans had trade relations with Sumer, Oman, Dilmun and some Central Asian lands. Indian exports to Sumer consisted of exotic items such as carnelian beads, gems, animals and cotton fabrics. We have practically no information as to what the Harappans imported from Sumer in exchange as almost negligible quantity of items of Sumerian provenance have been recovered from the Harappan ruins.

If the historical Indian fondness for gold is any indicator, the Harappan imports from Sumer must have been gold bullion. Some of this gold must have been used in acquiring raw materials from distant places. But the major portion, as per Indian practices down the countless centuries, went into ornaments for the womenfolk of the rich or was buried under ground for safe keeping. It was not used for capital formation or import of food grains. In any case import of food grains from Sumer or Dilmun would have been out of question because of the prohibitive cost of transportation due to the limitation of shipping space available in the small, rickety and perilous boats of the day.

It appears that the trading communities had almost a total control of the Harappan economy and therefore even the meagre surplus available to the state was appropriated by them and others who helped them in their enterprise such as shippers of goods, landlords and the priestly administrators. Such economic scarcity causes unequal distribution of goods, services and values. This kind of deprivation leads to strife If it was not physical force, used by secular rulers to keep the people fed and protect the wealthy from lower class reprisals , the submission of the have nots must have been obtained through some other means. The only alternative left to the Harappan state was regimentation of its people by religious superstitions of class and caste. As Kenoyer has observed, coercion through religion appears to have been the

major form of control for maintaining law and order in the Harappan domain for over 700 years (7)

The origin of the caste system is generally attributed to the Aryans. But curiously enough but for one passage in the tenth *manadala* of the Rg Veda, which was decidedly a much later interpolation, there is no other reference to the origin of the four castes. The Vedic terminology of *varna* was meant only to distinguish between Aryans and non Aryans. Besides, if we study other Indo=European societies such as the Iranians, the Greeks and the Germans etc we find that they too had no caste system.

On the other hand, all the essentials of a caste society are available in Harappa civilisation. Like modern India, and also Pakistan, the Harappan society was composed of several ethnic groups. Such groups usually practice endogamy. Even in modern India, with few exceptions, a Bangali tends to marry a Bengali, a Punjabi marries a Punjabi and a Tamil marries a Tamil and so on and so forth. Such clannishness in time leads to separate groupings with a characteristic mode of living and dealings with other groups. The archaeological evidence shows that in the Indus cities the people were engaged in different professions such as herding, fishing, leather working, bead making, metal smelting, shell working and pottery making. At some sites it has been discovered these occupations, particularly the manufacturing ones, occupied separate areas or streets. As these artisans and their families and descendants became specialists in their respective professions and crafts they too tended to become a class by itself. Endogamous clans with specialised and hereditary professions tend to become a caste. This has happened in the Hindu society through the ages.

And then there was a class difference between the rich and the poor. As suggested above, some industrious and clever individuals and communities gained control of the means of production and distribution and emerged as the dominant classes and castes. They lived in palatial multi-storied houses with their own wells, baths and privies while the working classes lived in poor two roomed quarters. As the hoards recovered from bigger houses suggest, the rich used jewellery and ornaments made of gold, lapis lazuli, shell and other precious objects, the poor on the other hand used jewellery of the same design but made of clay.[8]

The above evidence therefore suggests that there was a class and caste differentiation amongst the Harappa population. Furthermore, on the evidence of skeletal remains, one could say that the majority of the population was of Austric origin. They, and others, who performed such tasks whose economic value to the society was of a low order and involved pollution such as leather workers, town cleaners and the like, must have formed the lower orders of society. And they were subservient to upper classes of priests and traders.

The elaborate system of dividing society into different compartments therefore appears to have had its origin in the Pre-Aryan India. This is confirmed by Slater according to whom caste was already existent amongst the non-Aryan Dravidians who also had a priest-magician class which commanded a great prestige and respect amongst the people.[9] The Aryans took over this priestly class along with the caste system and reconstituted it on the lines described in the later Vedic literature.

The Harappans divided their society vertically into a hierarchy of castes and assigned each caste a particular role to play. The people of the lowest caste were required to do the most undesirable jobs and in the division of resources they were also the ones who got the barest minimum to subsist on. The division of society into castes was declared to be divinely ordained. It has been suggested above that Jainism was perhaps the dominant religion of the Harappan elites. According to a Jaina legend it was *Rasbhnatha*, their first *Tirthankara*, who taught the people agriculture, different trades and the arts and *organised the community into three castes* apparently of the priests, the traders and the workers.

The last category, besides menial workers, must have included cultivators as well because the Jainas regard agriculture as a sinful act because ploughing the earth involves injury not only to the earth itself but also to many kinds of animals and insects that dwell in it. As the Jainas also believed that metals and minerals etc also had souls, the metal workers, and others who were engaged in fashioning goods, too must have been included in the lower order of society as they were supposed to injure the soul of matter by manipulating or hammering it on their anvils.

The doctrine of *samsara* was an excellent tool in the hands of

priests for dissuading the beast in man from murder, theft and other criminal activities. It could also explain the eternal inequalities in men, all the sufferings that enter into human life with birth and all the variations between poverty and wealth, health and sickness. At the same time it held hope for a better future life if one performed pious deeds in the present life. Normally a person would not like to live in misery but if his mind has been trained to think that misery is his lot because of the sins committed by him in a previous life, he would accept his miserable condition with equanimity particularly when it is held out to him that if he performed his duties well in this life he would be entitled to a better living conditions in his next life. Thus, by invoking the doctrine of *Karma and samsara* the priestly classes could mold a primitive society to do their bidding. According to Will Durant" *Karma* is one of those inventions by which men have sought to bear evil patiently and to face life with hope"[10]. Thus indoctrinated each segment of the Harappan society passed on to their next generation the mysteries of its caste: its duties and its role in the fabric of society by that wonderful instrument called the tradition.. In this way the Harappan society achieved internal peace and stability without resorting to police methods.

That the Harappan society was saved from internal revolution by its caste system and the myth of *Sansara* is not a far fetched idea. For most of India's history the stability prevailing among vast masses of people has been due to this doctrine. It has saved the Hindu society from internal explosion and from dislocation by turbulent conflicts and warfare conducted by Indian rulers amongst themselves or by the onslaught of foreign hordes who invaded India time and again. No secular Government could bring such an enduring stability in a society as diverse as the Hindu society. As Prof. Paul Colinvaux has said," A civilisation with castes survives because it avoids some of the social unrest that would afflict a society proclaiming that all its people were equal."[11]

4. The Concept of *Sansara* becomes part of Aryan Thought

At the base of the conception of *sansara* myth lies the immovable conviction that this material world is full of misery and sorrow and that this mundane life is not a true existence. And as such the human endeavour should be to find means of stopping for ever

the mechanism of *karama* and transmigration and escaping for ever from the impermanence that clouds all joy of living - that is towards a final emancipation *(moksa)* Jainsim and the *Sankhya-Yoga* philosophy were vehemently opposed to the lures of life. This pessimistic attitude and denigration of life was exactly opposite to the world affirming, joyous and dynamic spirit of the Vedas.

The ideas of *Karma* and transmigration were unknown to the Vedic people There was absolutely no touch of pessimism in their outlook on life.. They were still filled with a keen delight in life and righteous man looked forward to an eternal continuance of life after death in the company of gods in Valahala. This simple but naive representation of soul's fate after death experienced a drastic change suddenly and without any transitional stage and the Vedic people were seized by the oppressive belief in *samsara*

There are some scholars who believe that the root of every belief and practice of Hinduism can be traced to the Vedas. They think that the Aryans were aware of this doctrine. There is just one verse in the Rg Veda which, by some stretching of imagination, is capable of being interpreted as mentioning a return to this world after the enjoyment of one's good deeds in the *pitraloka*. The verse is translated thus " unite with fathers, unite with *Yama*, with rewards of thy sacrifices and good deeds, in the highest heaven, leaving blemish behind, go back to home and unite with the body full of vigour."

This is the only occasion in the whole of Rg Veda where there is a hint of the return to this world after death. It must however be remembered that this hymn occurs in the context of a funeral rite and it may well be the deep desire and longing of the bereaved for the return to this world of their dear departed one. The Aryan sages of the Vedic age knew nothing of the transmigration. The chain of rebirth as a product of ignorance and the conception of release from this chain as the greatest good of the spiritual life was markedly absent in the Vedic hymns.

In the sixth chapter of *Chandogya Upnisada*, *Rsi Udalaka* is supposed to instruct his son, *Svetaketu*, in the complete course of orthodox Vedic studies. A perusal of this chapter shows that there is not a single reference to transmigration in it.. Even the sage *Udalaka* was not aware of it and had to go and sit at the feet of a

Kasatriya chief, *Jaivali*, to learn it. Similarly, sage *Yajanavalkya* appears to have learnt the doctrine of *Karma* from non-Aryan sources. He was a dissenter from the religious teaching and practices of his times. He is said to have flourished in the court of king *Janaka* of Mithla who used to have long debates on religious and philosophic matters with the Brahmins. In this endeavour he was supported, and probably prompted, by *Yajanvalkya* because he himself liked to put down pompous Brahmins.

Such a scholar as *Yajanvalkya* was quite likely to accept knowledge coming from any quarter. At first he tried to keep it as a secret knowledge to be passed on only to a chosen few but it was, as mentioned below, widely known in the non-Aryan or semi Aryanised people living beyond the pale of Aryan domains and as such he later allowed it to become public in Vedic circles. This doctrine was introduced as a new disclosure in the comparatively late period of *Upanisadas* such as *Brhadaranyaka, Chandogya and Kausitaki Upanisadas.*

Referemces

1. Richard Lannoy - The Speaking Tree - Oxford University Press 1971. p.12.
2. Heinrich Zimmer - opp.cit. p.217.
3. H. Jacobi - E.R.E. Vol.VII.p.465.
4. D.D,Kosambi - Introduction to the Study of Indian History Bombay 1958 - p.63
5. Jonathan M.Kenoyer opp.cit. p.15
6. Harold Watts - A Modern Reader's Guide to Religion - Barnes & Noble New York 1964 -p.407.
7. Jonathan M. Kenoyer - opp.cit. p.99.
8. Ibid. p.43.
9. Slater - The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture - p.52
10. Will Durant - Our Oriental Heritage - p.115.
11. Paul Colinvaux - The Fate of Nations - Simon & Schuster- New York 1980 -p.81

Mythology : Some twice told Tales

8

1. The Permanence of Religious Gesture

Mythology , as Romila Thapar has observed, is also a means of acculturation between diverse social and cultural. groups[1]. As will be discussed in the next chapter, there was a continuity between the Indus valley civilisation and that of the Ganges valley, both in time and space. Humanity in general finds it extremely difficult to abandon their religious beliefs to which they have been habituated for a long period. As Harold Watts has suggested ." There is a sense in which nothing that man has created religiously is ever lost or cancelled. Men may indeed dispense with stone age tools and ancient methods of hunting but men do not easily dispense with religious gesture and beliefs that once validated their practical acts." [2]

The Hindu instinct of conserving and clinging to religious beliefs, despite re-current attempts from within and without their society to change them, is well known. It is therefore not surprising that many aspects of the Ganges civilisation bear the impress of the earlier civilisation of western India because its descendants had, in very large measure, succeeded in preserving their mythology and folk traditions which they passed on to their successors - the Aryans. These older traditions were later codified in the epics, the Puranas and the Buddhist *Jatakas.*

Kosambi had also felt that the sheer volume and complexity of the later Hindu myths suggested that in the Dravido-Aryan acculturation it were the indigenous people who, with a background of the traditions of a literate urban civilisation, contributed the most.[3] The compilers of the epics, *Puranas* and other material of this genre had unfortunately mixed up the two traditions so indiscriminately that the whole mass of myths has become such a tangled web that it is difficult to separate the two strands.

A good example of this sort of inextricable commingling of the two traditions is provided by the marriage ceremony described in the *Grhya Sutras* which were composed a few centuries before the Common Era. According to this ceremony, the bridal pair on arriving at their new home, sit in silence on a bull's hide till the stars appear. Then the husband pointing to the pole star says to the wife," May you be constant as this star and happy in this house". The name of the star is *Dhruva* which, in modern western astronomy, is the star Polaris. These *sutras* were composed during the Nanda-Maurya epoch just about 2500 years ago. At that time Polaris was no where near the celestial north pole. Although it is our pole star now, as it happens to be nearest the pole, but in actuality it would become a true pole star only in the year 2100 C.E. when it would be almost on the celestial north pole.

The phenomenon known in astronomy as the precession of the equinoxes has, over thousands of years, caused many stars to become pole stars in turn. At the time the pyramids were being built, Thuban, in the constellation of Draco, was the pole star. And in about 12000 years from now the first magnitude star Vega will become the pole star. About 4500 years ago. i.,e. about the time Harrappan civilisation had began to flower, Alpha Draconis was the pole star. If to the ancients *Dhruva* was Alpha Draconis then the ceremony referred to above, which also does not find any mention in the Rg Veda, could quite possibly belong to an Harappan tradition.

Similarly some other astronomical data, now found in the epics, *Puranas* and other literature, could be of Harappan origin. They were after all in touch with the Sumerian society where the study of heavens had its beginning. A number of seals of Harappan origin, though probably made locally for the use of Harappan merchant-residents, have been found at Lagash, Umma, Tell Asmar, Ur and Susa in West Asia. The astrological character of some of these seals is striking inasmuch as they carry some zodiac signs such as water-carrier, scorpions and stars. Such seals therefore suggest that Harappans acquired some elements of astronomy from Sumer and brought it back home.

At the same time the Austrics who formed a major part of the Austric-Dravidian society of Harappa, too had some notions of the of the heavenly bodies as suggested by the Sanskrit words for full

moon and the new moon which are of Austric origin. Prior to the 4th century C.E., when the Hindus adopted the Roman system of a seven day week and each week-day named after a planet, they enumerated the days by season, constellation, dark and bright phases of the month and the *tithis*. They still retain this way of counting of days in their sacred and ritualistic calendar. This system is of Austric origin and so is the Sanskrit name for Pleiades, one of the constellation of stars. The Harappans being agriculturists were better placed in the sphere of astronomical knowledge than the Aryans who were mere herders and breeders of cattle.

The astronomical data available in the epics and *puranas* apparently relates to Harappan mythology more than it does to the myths of the Indo Aryans. One has therefore to be cautious in drawing some definite historical conclusions from such a mixed data as some scholars have done in calculating the dates of the arrival of the Aryans into India, the *Bharata* war and other similar events of note in our history.

There are a few tantalising hints here and there which leads one to believe that some mythic elements have entered the Hindu mythology from the bygone era of Harappa civilisation. Before the discovery of this civilisation William Crooke had suggested that there was a stratum of Babylonian cultures in Hindu myths and legends. He had, however, speculated that the Babylonian influences had reached India only about the 7th century B.C.E when sea routes of commerce were established between south India and Babylon[4] But we now know that the Harappans had, from the very beginning, close cultural and religious ties with Elam which was, in many ways, an extension of Mesopotamian civilisation.

The world inhabited by the Sumerians, the Elamites and the Harappans was small enough for there to have been contact between them. It is well known that the mature Harappa civilisation had close commercial and cultural ties with Mesopotamia of the Sumerio-Akkadian times. This contact would provide a likely setting for exchange of information amongst the people. It would therefore have been historically possible for the Harappan merchants and travellers to Sumer-Akkad to learn and imbibe the myths and legends of Sumer and bring them back to their homeland.

For example a naked, bearded, lion killing hero, reminiscent of the Sumerian epic hero, *Gilgamesh*, is portrayed in the Harappa seals. It is possible that the character of one of the *Pandava* princes, *Bhimsena*, was drawn after this Sumerian hero. They are portrayed as very powerful and rough characters prone to wrath easily. Both of them are said to have destroyed a jungle demon: *Gilgamesh* killed *Humbaba* in the forests of modern Lebenon or Elam and *Bhimsena* killed the demon *Hidimba*. There is yet another Harappan seal which represents bull-man *Enkidu* who was a dear friend of *Gilgamesh*, At the same time we find in the Mesopotamian seals of Jemdet-Nasar period a seal depicting a composite Bull-Elephant which is a well known figure in the Tantric iconography as *gajavrsabha*. The legend of the *sapta rishi* in Hindu mythology could be an echo of the seven sages who built the city of Uruk, the seat of the Sumerian ruler *Gilgamesh*.

The Jaina emblem of *swastika*, referred to earlier, was borrowed from West Asia where it appeared for the first time in Samara ware. And, therefore, if some of the mythic elements in later Hindu mythology have some affinity with the well documented mythic complex of Elam and Mesopotamia, it would add to their authenticity of being of pre-Vedic origins and belonging to the pre-Aryan Harappan religious complex. One must caution at this stage that the mythic motifs so borrowed from West Asia were later developed and conditioned by local landscapes, flora and fauna and social and religious necessities of the Harappans.

2. The Universal Flood

The first such myth which comes to mind is the story of the Flood which harks back to the Sumerian times and formed a part of the religious literature not only of the Sumero-Akkadians, Assyrians and the Hebrews of antiquity but continues to be such even in modern times for all the Judaic religions. There is no mention of the Flood in the Rg Veda and therefore one can rule out that the Aryans picked it up during their wanderings in West Asia. It appears for the first time in the *Satpatha Brahmana*, a work belonging to the second phase of the Vedic sacred literature.

By that time the Aryans had absorbed a lot of non-Aryan and pre-Aryan traits. According to the *Satpatha Brahmana* one morning when *Manu* was washing his hands a small fish came into his

hand along with water. The fish sought protection from *Manu* saying, " Rear me and I will save thee." It asked to be kept in a jar and later on when it outgrew the jar, in a pond, and finally in the ocean. *Manu* acted accordingly. The fish forewarned *Manu* of the forthcoming flood and advised him to build a boat and enter into it when the flood came. The flood began to rise at the appointed hour and *Manu* entered the ship. The fish then swam to him and he tied a rope of the ship to its horn and thus passed swiftly to the northern mountains where he fastened the boat to a tree. After the waters had subsided he disembarked and found that he alone had survived this catastrophe. He thus became the originator of a new breed of humanity.

The original version of flood story in the Sumerian mythology is that when the gods of Sumer got sick of the noise made by clamouring humanity their leader *Enlil* decided to wipe it out with a catastrophic flood. This was not a unanimous divine decision as a number of deities were not happy with it Accordingly, *Enki*, god of wisdom decided to save his devotee *Ziusudra*, the tenth and the last antediluvian king of Shuruppak, who was a pious and god-fearing man. *Enki* stationed himself behind the reed wall of the temple *Ziusudra* had built for him and informed him of the divine decision and instructed him to build a boat and carry with him his family and seed of life of all the created beings. *Ziusudra* followed his instructions and built, pitched, and provisioned his boat . And then the storm came and raged for seven days and nights and at the end of it the sun god *Utu* came forth lighting and warming up the earth. *Ziusudra* prostrated himself before him and offered him sacrifice of oxen and sheep. In the end he was deified and transported to Dilmun the paradise of gods.

The Indian version of this story is no doubt borrowed from the Sumerians via Harappa civilisation though in the telling of it the priestly composers, descendants no doubt of Harappan priesthood, had forgotten most of the details of the story but one about the fish who informed *Manu* of the impending flood and saved him from it. *As it happens in the Sumerian mythology and iconography god Enki is represented by a fish.* It therefore appears that *Enki* was worshipped in the Harappan cities, and if so, under what name? *Enki* is also known by another name, *Ea*, which means *one whose abode is waters.*

In the Hindu mythology we have a sage whose antecedents are quite obscure, and he first appears in the *Satpatha Brhamana* or after the period of the *Samhitas*. His name is *Narayana*, which according to *Manusmriti* (.1.10) is composed of two root words: *Nara* which means waters and *Ayana* which means abode and therefore the aforementioned law book describes him as one *whose house is in waters or he who lives in waters*. The epic *Mahabharta* (111.102.3.4) also describes him in the same way: "He is called *Narayana* because his resting place *(ayana)* is the waters *(nara)*".

Kosambi has sated that the name *Narayana* may be of a non-Aryan derivation because the word *nara* meaning waters is not from Sanskrit lexicon but seems to be derived from Dravidian or even Assyrian language [5] The Assyrians in fact called the river Euphratese as *Nari*[6] It will not be out of place to mention here that even now there exists a body of waters in lower Sindh which is called by the name *Nara* which is a canal or a branch of the lower Indus river.

Karmarkar has suggested that *Narayana* is of Dravidian origin, the serpent god of the proto-Indians having waters as his resting place[7] It has been suggested earlier that the Dravidian speakers hailed from Elam. In the Elamite pantheon there was a male gods who supplanted the goddess *Kiririsha* or *Pinkar* and is of great import to our subject: He was *Humban* who was worshipped throughout Elam under the title of *Master of Heaven*. During the 3rd millennium B.C.E. he occupied a third place in the Elamite pantheon but when the male gods took over, he stood at the head of the pantheon. Apparently he had to marry and become the husband of, *Pinkir* or *Kiririsha*, the *Mistress of Heaven,* to reach this status.

One of the Elamite monuments at Kurangan, which was discovered by Ernst Herzfeld, shows that *Humban's* throne was a coiled up snake and he sits thereon with his spouse goddess *Kiririsha*[8]. This vividly reminds one of later Hindu iconography of *Visnu* sleeping upon the eternal *Sesanaga* with his consort *Sri/Laxmi* sitting near his feet. *Narayana* was indeed of Dravidian/Harappan origin with the attributes of both *Enki* and the Elamite snake god *Humban*. In all the ancient mythologies snake had always been identified with waters. So when *Humban* is shown as sitting on a coiled up snake with his spouse the meaning conveyed is that he

and his spouse have their abode under waters. In other words *Humban* was *Enki* and so was *Narayana* in his proto-Indian incarnation.

The symbol of *Enki/Ea* is a fish. The Dravidian word for fish is *Mina*. Karmarkar had identified the people of Indus valley as *Minas*[9]. The Sanskrit word for fish is *matsya* and tribes known as *Matsya* people were, in early historical times, residing in the territories once occupied by the descendants of old Harappa civilisation. They later moved east round modern Bharatpur. At the time of integration of the princely states into the Indian Union, Bharatpur and adjoining areas were organised into an administrative unit called *Matsya* union. The memory of the Harappans as *Minas / Mastyas* has therefore persisted till today.

We do not know how and why *Narayana* came to be associated and identified with Visnu of the Vedic tradition. We could perhaps find a answer to this enigma in the personality and functions of *Enki/Narayana.* According to Sumerian tradition *Enki*, the third most important god of the Sumerian pantheon, was resourceful, skilful, handy and wise and a benign peace maker. He is sometimes called son of *An*, head of the Sumerian pantheon, " begotten in his own image". He was the creator and benefactor of mankind and watched over the universe and was responsible for the fertility of field and farm, of flock and the herd.

Berossos, a Babylonian priest of 3rd century B.C.E. writing a history of his people in Greek, stated that the arts of civilisation were brought to mankind (Sumero-Babylonians) by a man-fish who rose from the southern sea, i.,e. the Persian gulf. Berossos called him as *Oannes* which is but a Greek corruption of *Enki*. The Sumerians credited him with creating the plough, the axe, the reeds and, in short, all the instruments and implements which were responsible for the creation of Sumerian civilisation. Above all, *Enki was a friend of humanity and interceded on its behalf with other high gods*. It is mentioned in their traditions that *Enki* even visited *Meluhha*, the ancient name under which the Indus valley was known to the Sumerians, to bless it most generously with trees, and reeds, oxen and birds, gold, tin and bronze.[10].

Jainas believe that their first *Titthankara Rasbhanatha*, whose origin is traceable to Harappan times, taught his people

agriculture, trades and arts etc. This legend is no doubt influenced by *Enki's* deeds which were known to the Harappans. Here is the link which joins *Enki* with *Narayana*. The latter therefore could be assumed to have all the attributes of the former. On being adopted in the Vedic tradition the *Taittirya Aranyaka* for the first time speaks of *Narayana* as the Supreme Being with all the *Upanisdic* attributes. What was it that led to *Narayana's* being later identified with *Visnu* who was decidedly a minor divinity in the Rg Veda? *Enki- Narayana's* creative aspect and love for humanity could possibly supply the point of juncture with *Visnu*.

In the Rg Veda *Visnu* appears as a minor deity whose chief exploit was the taking of famous three steps by which he measured the universe. By measuring the universe he, so to say, took part in its creation - either independently, as was thought in later times, or as an ally of *Indra*. *Visnu* was sometimes thought of as an aspect of *Agni* and he shared that divinity's position as intermediary between gods and men like the Sumerian *Enki*. He considered his worshippers as kinsmen and welcomed the faithful to his heaven. His benevolent aspect was thus prominent in the Vedas and he was already called " the unconquerable preserver". (R.V.1.186.10). In *Mahabharata*, *Visnu* is identified with *Narayana* and in the *Bhisamparvan* of the epic the Supreme Spirit is addressed as *Visnu Narayana*.

In the same epic *Visnu-Narayana* is also identified with *Vasudeva* who , as we shall discuss later, was a divinity of the *Bhagvatas* much before the time of compilation of the extant epic. *Vasudeva* was also known to his worshippers as *Satvata, Satyaki* and *Janardhana*. When *Bhagvatism* developed into *Vaishnavaism* all these epithets and more were applied to *Visnu*. The epic hero *Bhisma* called *Vasudeva* as the 'eternal god'. *Vasudeva* was later identified with *Krishna*, the war lord of the non-Aryan *Vrsni* tribe. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* Krishna states that ' he is *Vasudeva* amongst the *Vrsinis'*. It was in this manner that the pre-Aryan Harappan divinity *Narayana* was adopted and absorbed completely in *Visnu* who hence forth was depicted as having his abode in the waters or laying on a huge snake *Ananta*.

This motif, as mentioned in above, was derived from the Elamites and definitely belongs to the Harappan culture complex. *Enki/ Narayana's* symbol of a fish was likewise adopted as the first

incarnation of Visnu - the *Matsya Avatara* in the later Hindu tradition. The cult of *Visnu/Narayana* in its progressive development absorbed the worship of totems such as the tortoise, the boar and the man-lion.

3. The Hindu Cosmology of Four Yugas

Let us now examine the Hindu cosmology of the four *yugas*. The Vedic texts do not show great concern with cosmology nor the views expressed therein are consistent. In the *Brahmanas* and later Vedic texts there are repeated esoteric speculations concerning time and the unit of time the year with nary a hint about the elaborate myth of the four *yugas*. This myth suddenly appears fully developed in the *Puranas* which were collated and edited during the period 3rd to 10th centuries C.E. However, the oldest material in the *Puranas* is much older and in some instances it may possibly pre-date the Vedas.

According to Dimmitt and Van Buitenen, "the oldest material in the *Puranas* was recited either in a different milieu than the Brahmanic ritual or by persons other than the Brahmin priests. This alternate milieu would be the source of the *smriti* tradition that gave rise eventually to both epic and *Puranic* collections."[11] These ancient texts may therefore contain material of Harappan provenance whose origin could have been inspired by the Elamo - Sumero-Akkadian culture-complex, The myth of the four yugas was likewise adopted from the Sumerian seed nucleus

History, as Noah Kramer has said. begins at Sumer. We owe the invention of writing, mathematics, astrology. astronomy and a score of other arts and sciences of civilisation to the Sumerians. As early as 3200 B.C.E with the appearance of writing, the Sumerians appeared to have developed two systems of enumeration: the decimal and the sexigesimal. It is the second system which of interest us here. In India the ratio of a rupee to naya paisa is 1 to 100. In the Sumerian sexigesimal system it would be 1 to 60. This notation was extended to numbers in general thus creating a system for all arithmetic calculations based on the number 60.

The Sumerians divided the circle into 360 degree, each degree to 60 minuets and each minute into 60 seconds. They also divided the day into 24 hours and each hour into 60 minutes and each

minute into 60 seconds. We are still indebted to them for this invention.

If writing was created by the need to keep records and mathematics by the forces of the market place, astronomy was inspired by the desire of the Sumerians to understand the celestial motions that followed each other in precise order day in and day out without let or hindrance. By studying the heavens the Sumerians had by 2700 B.C.E succeeded in dividing the flow of time in 365 units of 24 hours each. But in deference to their sexigesimal system of enumeration the Sumerian year was of 12 months of 30 days each or 360 days. The remaining five days were devoted to the festivities connected with the dying of the old and the birth of the new year. The days were further grouped in 72 five- day weeks.

In their study of mathematics and the heaven the Sumerians came to believe that a certain number was supposed to give access to the cosmic order. This was number 9. This is the highest and the last digit and has certain mysterious quality about it. Multiply any number with 9 and the sum of the digits will also come to 9 (7x9=63; 6+3=9). And now reverse the digits and you get 36 the sum of these two digits is again 9. Add all the numbers from 1 to 9 (1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9) the result would be 45 the sum total of which is again 9. The Sumerians knew of 9 heavenly bodies - Sun, Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn and two waxing and waning modes of the Moon which to the Sumerians were two different bodies. These 9 bodies still form the basis of Hindu astrology and there is a device or *manadala* to represent these bodies and it is called *swastika* which appears first in Samara ware of West Asia..

The Sumerians had also discovered that at the time of spring equinox the heavens were not in the same position as they were in the previous year. They calculated that the annual lag was 50 seconds which in the course of 72 (7+2=9) years amounts to 1 degree. This processional over 30 degree would amount to 2160 years ((2+1+6+0=9) and a complete cycle of the Zodiac of 360 (3+6=9) degrees in 25920 years (2+5+9+2+0= 18=1+8=9). This was called the great year at the end of which there would be cosmic dissolution and return. If we divide this great year by one Sos, the Sumerian unit of 60, the result obtained is 432 (4+3+2=9).

In 250 B.C.E a Babylonian priest Berosos, whom we have already met above, on the basis of ancient traditions and records composed a list of 10 Sumerian kings who had ruled before the great flood. The sum total of the years these ante-diluvian kings had ruled was 432,000.

The years the each king is supposed to have ruled are nothing but the figment of imagination but the thing to be noted is that Berosos's eon corresponds exactly to the traditional Sumerian magic number 432 the sum total of which is 9. What is more significant about this number 432,000 is that it corresponds exactly with the number of years allotted to the *Kali Yuga* in the Hindu cosmology..

There are four yugas in the Hindu cosmology and their duration is first computed in the years of gods and these *yugas* and their duration in god years is as follows:

Krita yuga	4800
Treta	3600
Dwapara	2400
Kali	1200

As each year of the gods is equal to 360 years of men the duration of each of these *yugas* is as follows: *Krita*=1,728,000, *Treta*= 1,296,000, *Dwapara*=864,000 and the last *Kali*=432,000.the total of these four is = 4,320,000 years forming an eon called a *Manvaṇtara* or a *Mahayuga*. Two thousand Mahayugas or 8,640,000,000 make a *Kalpa* or a night and day of *Brahma*.

The readers must have already noted the occurrence of that mystical Sumerian number of 432. If *Kali* yuga is 432,000 years *Dwapara* is twice that, *Treta* thrice and *Krita* four times that. Thus the four yugas are multiples of 432 . And so are the *Mahayuga* and the *Kalpa*. In regard to the night and day of *Brahma* it is interesting to note that a 24 hour period has 24x60x60 =864400 seconds or 43200 seconds for night and day each. There again we have that number of 432 the sum total of which is 9. Thus 9 was the mystery number of the universe. The order of the universe in the Neolithic world was revered as the body of the Goddess and therefore She was, as in the case of Hindu *Mahadevi*, and later

her spouse *Siva*, were known by 108 names each: 1+0+8= 9. This mystical number 9 makes its appearance in the Epic Mahabharta also.

The battle was fought for 18 days and was narrated in 18 chapters of Epic. The Bhagvat Geeta, the most important interpolation in the Epic also consists of 18 chapters. After the battle Yudhistra is said to have rules for 36 years and it is reported that Krishna died 36 years after the Mahabharta war.

The four ages of Hindu mythology correspond to no known phenomenon and appear to be wholly imaginary. According to some scholars the names of the four ages correspond roughly to number 4, 3, 2,and 1 and may refer to the rolls of a now forgotten dice game because these names by themselves do not lend to any satisfactory meaning. It would appear that the idea of an eon based on the mystical number 432 was borrowed by the Harappans from the Sumerians.

In the fourth millennium B.C.E the Sumerian priestly watchers of the night skies made a far reaching discovery which amounted to an enormous leap from the confines of their homeland between the two rivers to the cosmos, They discovered that the seven heavenly bodies visible to them travelled round the zodiac of the fixed constellations with astonishing regularity. This cosmic order where each heavenly body returned to the point from where it had started gave rise to the notion that the time was cyclic in nature for ever revolving in great impersonal cycles.

In each cycle a universe was born, flourished and then dissolved back into primeval matter to be born again and again in an unending round of birth and death. This mythology of ever returning unending cycles of time reached the Indus valley where it inspired *Sankhya* formulations as well as the proto-Jaina conception of enormous spans of time following one another with an inexorable regularity.

The progressive deterioration/ amelioration of the cycles of time was of course purely an Indian addition and was, as suggested by Kosambi, based on the observed seasonal phenomenon of India itself [12]. The mind boggling time spans of these ages were also inspired by the Indian tendency to impress a certain point of view

by exaggeration. An example of this kind may be noted below where *Indra* is described as performing *yoga* for *60,000 years* prior to his battle with the demon *vritra*. Such examples abound in the *Puranic* literature. The chroniclers of such myths used these enormous time spans only as a literary device to amaze or overwhelm the reader or the listener.

By the time the Epics and the *Puranas* were finally edited Brahmanism had absorbed most of the traditions of the non-Aryans Dravidians-Austrics of Harappa civilisation . The cosmology of the four ages was a legacy of that culture.

Mesopotamia, the Sumero-Babylonian homeland where this notion of cyclic time was born gave it up under Semetic and/or Zoarastrian inspired new theology. Under this new dispensation the Mesopotamians adopted a progressive view of time which had a beginning, a middle and a prophesied end. This concept is a part and parcel of the monotheistic dispensations of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The proto-Indians, however. clung to the old notion of cyclic time and developed it into a highly sophisticated doctrine of *Samsara*, where not only the world but mankind at large is periodically rejuvenated and regenerated and even individual beings are reincarnated in terms of metempsychosis. This doctrine has remained basic to all the Indic religions.

4. A Pre-Aryan god Becomes an Aryan god

We have seen above how a minor Vedic god, *Visnu*, acquired and assimilated within himself various traits of pre-Aryan gods of the Harappa civilisation. We shall now discuss how a pre-Aryan god of that culture acquired the attributes of a Vedic god.

One of the most important seals found at Mohenjodaro represents a deity who is seated in a yogic posture on a low throne wearing a horned head dress. He appears to have three faces and is ithyphallic and is flanked by wild animals. Every one of these features can be found in the description of *Siva* of later times. Moreover, stones identical in form to the *lingam*, the phallic symbol of *Siva* have been found at all Harappan sites. No wonder practically all of the Indologists from Sir John Marshall onward have identified this Harappan deity with *Siva Pasupati* or lord of the beasts of later times.

The Elamite gods, as also the gods of neighbouring Mesopotamia, wore horned crowns. Therefore there is no doubt that the figure in the aforementioned seal was that of a divinity. A sherd of pre-Harappan pottery from Kot Diji depicts possibly a divine being wearing such a crown. This crown appears to be made of water buffalo horns. Interestingly the divinity of the Harappan seal is also depicted wearing a similar crown. As Kosambi had pointed out sometime ago this divinity with this particular head dress could be a representation of the pastoral buffalo-god *Mhasoba*[13].

Recent studies have confirmed this. Earlier it was thought that the deity represented in the seal had, as mentioned above, three faces. It now transpires that the figure's face is that of a buffalo with its outlining dewlap. The tuft in the centre of the crown is a stylised tree or a plant. This reminds one of tree-and horn crown worn by the Elamite and Sumerian priests. The figure in the seal thus represents a human-like buffalo or Kosambi's *Mhasoba* who seems to be the male counterpart of the Goddess who herself combines both tiger and buffalo attributes.[14]

The taming of the buffalo was probably the work of the Austrics prior to the arrival of the West Asian agriculturists. Because the Austrics revered animals the powerful buffalo could have been one of their divinities. The powerful male buffalo was a symbol of fertility and protection. With the arrival of the agrarian Goddess *Durga* the Mhasoba was superseded as depicted in the myth of killing of the buffalo demon by *Durga*. It has been suggested by some scholars that the scene depicted in the proto-Siva seal was actually a buffalo sacrifice to the Goddess who also appears in the right hand top corner of the seal in the company of her mount, a tiger. This sacrifice aimed at a symbolic unification of the buffalo god with the Goddess. This sacrificial scene could have given rise to the later myth of *Durga* as *Mahisamardini*. In Tamil mythology the buffalo god is shown as desiring such union. In this mythology Siva is the buffalo god who, through this sacrificial death is reborn as the consort of the Goddess[14] In certain traditions the buffalo demon while still in human shape adored the Goddess. In some of the sculptures of the Goddess as Slayer, his body is that of a man and his head that of a buffalo and he ecstatically surrenders to Her as She slays him. There is also a myth that the buffalo god was not actually killed and that *Parvati*, which is another name of

Durga, as *Yogesvari* was married to him and that he is another form, though diluted, of *Siva*.

In Pune there is a shrine where he is still being worshipped along with *Durga*. Tamil myths also suggest that he was the lover/ suitor of the Goddess. *Siva* grew out of some primitive beliefs along several tracks into a sublimated high god. It is therefore possible that the attributes and rites of the deity of the Mohenjodaro seal were gradually brought into conformity, by a process of assimilation, compromise and integration with that of some Sumero-Elamo-Dravido-Austric deities and from this combination emerged the Pre-Aryan god whom we can call *Siva*. That was of course not his real name and in the absence of any decipherable written records we do not know under what name his worshippers paid homage to him.

But his depiction on an Harappan seal as ithyphalic figure seated in a *yogic* posture leads us to believe that if this figure is not be taken as a prototype of *Siva* then it does at least represents an early association between the ascetic and phallic that has persisted in the mythology of *Siva* to the present day. First and foremost *Siva* is a *Mahayogin*, Lord of *Yoga*. A passage in Mahabharta states that since *Siva* is a *Mahayogin* any one who wants to approach him has to do so through *yoga*. *Siva* is also a god of fertility who has been worshipped in the form of phallus, *lingam*, since times immemorial.

The said seal also represents him surrounded by animals and *Siva* has always been called *Pasupati*, lord of the beasts. As lord of the beasts he had a counter part in Sumerian mythology. His name was *Samuqan* and he was always depicted as rough of body with long matted hair. The epic *Mahabharta* preserves three different stages of the acceptance of *Siva* in the Aryan cultus: first the older non-Aryan tradition, second, the symbiosis of this non-Aryan deity with *Rudra* of the Vedas and lastly the accretion of new material. It is interesting to note that in the first stage he is referred to as *Maha-Yogisvara, Mahasepa Nagna* (MB xviii.17.46), *Dig-vasas* and *Urdhava-reta* (M.B.xviii.14.21-17.42).

These titles indicate the early yogic and nude representation of the Harappa seals. Besides, his powers, as described in the epics, were said to derive from the practice of austerities, that is from

yoga, rather than from sacrifices which was a mark of Aryan culture. As in the case of *Narayana* this Harappan deity could have acquired the attributes of the Elamaite god *Inshushinak*. He was the second most important god in the Elamite pantheon and was held in some awe by the Elamites.

An assyrian inscription describes him as a mysterious god who lingers in secret places where no one can see what his divine being is about. He rules the grave yards. This could have given proto-*Siva* the name of *Bhuteshwara,* the lord of ghosts and goblin who haunts cemeteries and cremation places, wearing serpents round his neck and skulls for a necklace, in the company of imps and goblins. Both Elam and the Harappa Culture were quite familiar with the concept of androgyny. During the excavations at Tepe Yahia a small figure made up of green soap stone was found which had both male and female characteristics. This reminds one of *Kadaval*, the androgynous Great God of the Dravidians and later of *Siva Ardhanarisvara.*

In the epic *Mahabharata* Siva is called *An*. It is interesting to note that the head of the Sumerian pantheon was also called *An*. *Siva* had a son by the name of *Kartikya* who is known to the Dravidians as *Subramanian*. He even now bears two names of endearment - *Velan* and *Anil*. The last term of endearment reminds one of the Sumerian god *Enlil* who was the son of An [15]. This evidence goes to show that the concept of *Siva* is of non-Aryan Harappan origin particularly when his name is not known to the Ṛg Veda. As Prof. David Kinsley has pointed out "Siva was undoubtedly a non-Aryan indigenous deity who was looked upon with considerable suspicion by the Brahman custodians of the sacred cult. His association with world renunciation, asceticism, and the powers of fertility as symbolised by the *lingam* probably marked him as a deity who belonged to the fringes of society from the point of view of the Brahman establishment. The antagonism between *Siva* and *Daksa* probably reflects this conflict [16]".

Rudra was a minor Vedic god whose name is derived from the root *rud* which name means " Howler" (Latin rudere= howl, bellow) and also "Weeper" (Russian rydut= weep). As a god of storms and high winds he had deep roots in the Indo-European past stretching all the way from Greek *Apollo* to the great Germanic god *Odin* [17]. The root rud also connotes red as in English *ruddy*. In Rg

Veda *Rudra* is invoked only in four hymns and he is described there as a well dressed god of ruddy complexion and red hair suggesting that the earliest concept of the god was inspired by red storm clouds.

He was a generous and helpful god who was the bringer of fertilising rain. He was a protector and lord of the cattle, *Pasupati*. In this kindly aspect he was known as intelligent, bountiful and lord of song and sacrifice, a divine physician renowned for his healing arts. As lord of the cattle, *pasupati,* his symbol was a bull. As god of the storms he was also violent and in his destructive capacity he was almost an alter ego of *Agni*. But later on, in the *Yajur* Veda and *Brahamana* texts, his character undergoes a drastic change and he becomes a hideous and terrible god. In this terrible aspect *Rudra* was depicted as a ruddy man of wild temper, murderous, spitting like a wild bull. He becomes a robber god and lord of thieves, a divine archer who shot arrows of death and disease at gods. men and beasts.

These anti-Vedic traits continue to multiply until the Rg Vedic god who granted boons, forgave sins and blessed his devotees assumes a dual personality combining benign and malevolent traits. In his terrible aspect he was often addressed in the *Yajur* Veda as *Siva*, a propitiatory euphemism meaning kindly, friendly, and auspicious. His wife *Rudrani* becomes the cruel goddess of bloody sacrifices. She unchains upon the world sickness, terror and death. The word *Siva* is said to be partly of Dravidian origin as *Sivan* means red in Tamil language. The *Yajur* Veda also addresses him several times as *Samhhu* which again means red metal or copper in Dravidian language (*Sembu* in Tamil) which translated into Aryan speech is *Rudhra*. This name could therefore be identified with the Vedic storm god *Rudra* although the meanings of the two words were quite different. For the ancient myth makers the similar sound of the two words was enough to fuse the two gods.. The *Yajur* Veda also called *Rudra* as *Sankara and Mahadeva* which were peculiar to god *Siva* of later Hinduism. It is obvious that from *Yajur* Veda onwards some alien influences were at work to merge this ancient Indo-European god with the unnamed god of the Harappan origin.

Rudra's new wild and terrible attributes, and his being lord of the cattle, symbolised by a bull and having red hair and ruddy

complexion are the points of juncture between him and the unnamed pre-Aryan lord of the beasts of Harappa seals. *Siva's* mount. the *Nandi* bull, was provided by *Rudra* and had no connection with bulls depicted on the Harappan seals. If, the concept of *Siva* owes its origin to a pre - Harappan buffalo deity, he should have a buffalo as his mount and not a bull. Besides, this figure does not show any bull amongst the animals surrounding this deity.

Perhaps the most widespread cult of the ancient world was the cult of the bull, the beast sacred to the Great Goddess. Wild bulls were venerated from Neolithic times as complimentary to Her generative power. The bull was sacred and a symbol of potency. He was the masculine counterpart of the female power of the Goddess. The horns of the bull by analogy were understood to be crescent moon, the lord of the rhythm of the womb and of rains and dew which fertilised the earth. Bull's skulls which resembles the female uterus and fallopian tubes were displayed on the walls of caves, rock shelters and houses and temples of the Goddess.

The ancient Cretan god, *Poseidon*, son of the goddess *Potnia* - the Powerful One - was a bull. *Apis*, the bull god of ancient Egypt, was sacred to the Egyptian Great Goddess *Isis*. The Bull also was a part of the worship that was accorded to the Babylonian goddess *Tiamat*. Thus wherever Goddess was worshipped the sacred bull accompanied it. The Harappans were a Goddess oriented people and must have been aware of the significance of the bull in her worship. The bull was adopted by the proto-Jains as an emblem of their first *Tirthankara* because it represented strength, fertility and creativity and to the Jainas this saviour was all these things and more because he had given them the arts of civilisation. The bull's appearance on the numerous Harappan seals testifies either to the worship of the Great Goddess or the first Jaina *Tirthankara*. Since the seals were believed to have been used in Harappan commerce and the Jainas till to-day continue to be a predominantly mercantile community, it is tempting to believe that the bull depicted on the seals was a Jaina emblem rather than the *Nandy* bull that came to be associated with *Siva* as his vehicle or *vahana* in later Hindu mythology.

Both the *Yajur* Veda and the later Vedic texts record the progress of Rudra's syncretism with other local and regional gods such as

Bhava, Sarva, Ugra and Mahadeva etc until he finally merges into Siva, his mythological successor. With the combination and conflation of the attributes of these two deities was born *Lord Siva* who gradually rose to great prominence. Making good use of the doctrine of transmigration of the soul, the Hindu texts declared that *Siva* in his previous incarnation was *Rudra* and that his wife *Parvati* was in fact the incarnation of *Rudra's* wife *Sati*. In the *Svetasvatara Upnishad* he figures as the Great God (*Mahadeva*) superior to the Vedic pantheon and similar position is accorded to his spouse *Uma Haimavati* or *Parvati* in the *Kena Upnishad*. Even after the merger of *Rudra* with *Siva* the old antipathy of the Aryan priesthood did not go away.

A study of *Pasupati* cult in the post Rg Vedic literature shows that it was still being treated as a foreign cult which was grudgingly accepted by the Aryans within their religion. In all the ritual texts while all other gods are invited to the place of sacrifice, *Siva* and his followers are asked to go away. In some instances even his name was a taboo. For example *Aitariya Brahmana* refers to him as "this god" or "that god" or the "god whose name contains the word *pasu or bhuta*". This attitude towards *Siva* clearly indicates that he was a non-Aryan god, a gods of aversion borrowed, by the Aryans from their non-Aryan predecessors.

5. Percolation of Some West Asian Myths Through Harappa

There are some other motifs of West Asian mythology which find an echo in the Hindu myths of later times though in a much altered form. The legend of *Sunehsepa*, the Brahmin boy who was purchased to substitute *Rohit*, son of king *Hariscandra*, for sacrifice to *Varuna*, reminds one of the ancient Hebrew legend of the sacrifice of *Abraham* of his son *Isaac*. This custom of sacrificing the first born was also quite common amongst the West Semites but we find no sanction for such a practice in the entire Vedic literature. It could thus have been a graft from some Harappan myth.

Then there is the legend of the search for the *Elixir of Immortality* which is common to both Sumerian and Classical Hindu mythology. The central themes shared by both the myths are the presence of

a snake and the location of the elixir in the depth of the ocean. In the Sumerain myth the hero *Gilgamesh* after the death of *Enkidu*, his dear friend and comrade of many an adventure, becomes despondent at the prospect of his own death and sets out to seek the elixir of immortality. He reached *Dilmun*, the paradise of Sumerian gods, where he meets *Ziusudra*, hero of the great flood whom we have already met above. On his advice *Gilganesh* dived into the depth of the ocean and retrieved the plant after the eating of which he would become immortal.

He decided, however, to take a bath in fresh water before eating the plant. While he was busy in doing so a snake came forth and ate the plant and Gilgamesh was thus deprived of the chance to become immortal. In the Indian myth the ocean was churned by gods and demons by using mount *Mandara* as the churning stick, snake *Wasuki* as a churning rope and god *Visnu* in his incarnation as a tortoise providing a fulcrum. By their joint effort the gods and demons brought forth *Amrita*, the elixir of immortality from the depth of ocean but the gods, with the help of *Visnu*, deprived the demons the fruits of their labour and consumed the elixir themselves and thus became immortal. In some versions of this myth the snake *Wasuki* also got a share of this elixir. *Gilgamesh* and the demons were denied immortality but the snake got it: the snake sheds its skin and is, so to say, born again

Now we have the legend of the eternal enmity between the bird, which is the symbol of the sun, the sky and the heavens, and the snake which represents the earth, moisture and fertility. This myth must have existed in the Sumerian mythology from remote past but its concrete representation is in the chalice of a Sumerian king Gudea dated to about 2000 B.C.E From Sumer it travelled west to the pre-Greek Aegean and made its appearance in many Greek myths of later times. To the east it travelled to the Indus valley and was passed on to the classical Hindu mythology in the legend of *Garuda* who is called *nagantaka*, he who kills serpents, and *pannagasana*, he who devours serpents. His mother *Vinata* was held in slavery by co-wife *Kadru* and her hundred serpent sons which was the cause of lasting enmity between the eagle-like *Garuda* and the serpents.

An echo of the legend of the tower of Babel has been found in the *Brahmanas* where the *Assuras* pile up a great fire alter by which

they hope to scale the sky. When they have climbed some distance, *Indra* pulls out a brick and the Assuras fall to the ground and all but two are turned into spiders and these two are turned into *Yama's* dogs.

The mythology of the birth of *Karna*, who to my mind was the greatest hero of the epic *Mahabharata*, has its source in the birth legend of king Sargon of Akkad and Sumer (2350 B.C.E). It may be mentioned here that the Sargon legend is the most ancient in this genre and all others such as that of *Moses* and *Remus and Romulus* are subsequent to it.

The story told in *Jaiminiya Brahmana* and the *Mahabharata* of the three brothers *Ekata, Dvita and Trita* where the two elder brothers *Ekata and Dvita* throw their youngest brother *Trita* into a dry well in order to acquire his cattle reminds one of the legend of Joseph and his brethren of the Old Testament.

There is an Harappan seal which depicts a composite of a man and a tiger which could be the source of the myth of *Visnu's* avatara *Narasimha*. After all *Prahlada*, the hero of the legend of *Narasimha*, and his family belonged to what the Aryans called their enemies *Daityas*, the native pre-Aryan people of India.

In the Neolithic world where the Goddess was the Supreme Deity, She was considered not only the Creatrix but also having the power to resurrect. A belief current amongst the inhabitants of Kalahari desert is that a woman possess something that enables men to live; her genitals. According to this belief a woman can bring a man to life by giving him sex. There are several myths from Sumer, Egypt, Babylon and the Minoan civilisation which illustrate this motif. The earliest of such myths comes from Sumer where goddess *Inanna* descends through seven gates to the nether world to bring her dead husband *Dumuzi* to life. The motif is repeated in the similar myths surrounding the Egyptian *Isis* and her husband *Osiris*, Babylonian *Ishtar* and *Tammuz* and the Minoan *Aphrodite* and *Adonis*. The evidence that this myth was actually practised in ancient Sumer is provided by the royal tombs excavated by Wooly at Ur.

Here queen Shub-Ad together with her retinue was buried alive along with her spouse the king. It has been suggested by Joseph

Campbell that this myth could be the basis of the practice of *Suttee* in India.[18] A double burial of a man and woman has been found in the Harappan ruins of Lothal. The motif underlying *Suttee* is that as woman was the embodiment of *Sakti*, the Primal Power, the Source of Being not only of temporal but life eternal, it was her task to bring her dead husband to eternal life when buried or burnt alive with him.

The festival of *Kumbha* which is celebrated every 12 years at the confluence of Ganges and Yamuna again points to the Pre-Aryan worship of the Great Mother. The *Kumbha* means an earthen pot. A clay pot has always been a symbol of the Great Mother who contains, protects, nourishes and gives birth. As Erich Neumann has stated," The sacral relation of the woman to pot originates in the symbolic significance of the form and also in the symbolic significance of the material from which the pot is made, namely clay, for clay belongs to earth, which stands in relation of *participation* with the Feminine" [19]. "The feminine symbol of the vessel", as suggested by Ann Belford Ulanov, "at its highest level is the vessel of spiritual transformation."[20]. In the celebration of the *Kumbha* festival, therefore, we renew our relationship with the Great Mother who was the presiding deity of the non-Aryan Harappa civilisation.

Writing in late fifties or early sixties, Leonard Cottrell, author of many popular books on archaeology and lost civilisation, had bewailed," As far as we know the Indus people created no poetic myths and chronicles, as did the Sumerians. We have no Indus equivalent of the Great Epic of Gilgamish and Enkidu; no names of their gods and kings (if indeed they had kings), their sages and heroes are unknown".[21] Well, detailed above are some of the myths and legends that have survived, albeit in somewhat changed form, in the garb of Hindu myths.

There must be many more legends of this kind in the Hindu mythology which were inspired by the Elamo-Sumerian mythology through Harappa civilisation and the task of unravelling them must be left to others because I have neither the means nor the ability to do so. A start could perhaps be made with the *Jaiminya Brahmana* which contains many tales of sex and violence, sacrifice and danger. These legends are based on folk tales and have an atmosphere about them which is not strictly kosher Aryan. They deal with Assuras,

demons and some other unsavoury characters who are normally the enemies of the Aryans. Some extra Vedic elements seem to have crept in the making of these tales. As Wendy O'Flaherty has so aptly remarked," It seems possible that the *Jaiminya*, combining as it does the priestly and folk traditions, the sacred and the profane, and coming as it does almost precisely halfway between the Vedic and the Epic recension, provide a kind of stepping stone, a half-way house for the folk tradition to touch down for a moment in the Sanskrit world before leaping back into the vernacular culture that had always sustained it and would continue to do so for many centuries."[22]

References

1. Romila Thapar - Recent Perspectives of Early India History - Bombay 1996 - p.108.
2. Harold Watts - A Modern Reader's Guide to Religion - Barnes & Noble New York 1964 - p.58.
3. D.D.Kosambi - Introduction to the Study of Indian History - Bombay 1958 - p.104.
4. William Crooke - Encyclopedia of Religion & Ethics Vol. p.688.
5. D.D.Kosambi - opp.cit. p.118
6. A.T. Olmstead - History of Persian Empire - University of Chicago Press 1970 -p.56.
7. A.P.Karmarker - Religion & Philosophy of the Epics - Cultural Heritage ofIndia - Calcutta 1958 - Vol.2. p.85.
8. Walther Hinz - The Lost World of Elam - New York University Press 1973 - p.51.
9. A.P.Karmarkar - The Religions of India Vol.1
10. S.N.Kramer - The Sumerians - University of Chicago Press 1970 -p.173.
11. Cornelia Dimmit & J.A.B Van Buitenen - Classical Hindu Mythology - Philadelphia 1978 - p.5.
12. D.D.Kosambi - Ancient India - Meridian Books New York - 1969 p.22.
13. D.D.Kosambi - Myth & Reality - Bombay 1992 - p.2.

14. Hopkins & Hiltebeitel - Encyclopedia of Religion - Vol.VII p.222.
15. Frederique Marglin - opp.cit. Vol.XV. p.531.
16. David Kinsley - Hindu Goddesses - University of California Press 1988 -p.39.
17. Jaan Puhvel - Comparative Mythology - 1989 - p.56.
18. Joseph Campbell - In All Her Name - Harper - San Francisco- p.65.
19. Erich Neumann - The Great Mother - Princeton University Press 1963 - p.143.
20. Ann Belford Ulanov - The feminine in Jungian Psychology & Christian Theology 1971.
21. Leonard Cottrell - Lost Worlds - Dell Publishing Co., New York 1964 - p.160.
22. Wendy Doniger O' Flaherty - Tales of Sex & Violence - p117.

The Decline of the Vedic Religion : Power of the Native Tradition

9

1. The Verbal Tradition

As in the case of the Indo-Aryans and the Iranians, all other Indo-European people such as the Greeks, the Latins, the Germans and the Celts, etc. also preserved a considerable literature which was transmitted orally. A study of this literature can help us in reconstructing with considerable accuracy the features which were common to the life and living of the entire Indo-European peoples. What we learn from this study is that they were a mobile warlike, cattle herding, chariot racing semi-nomadic tribes unattached to any specific location or city. In their social life they were polygamous, patriarchal, filthy, tough, equally addicted to gambling and hard liquor and on occasion not above stealing cattle from their neighbouring tribes.

They worshipped friendly gods but had doubts in the efficacy of their worship. Their gods were not engaged to any local association such as a particular tree, a pond or a rock as is the case of the gods of a sedentary people. They built no permanent places of worship. Their rituals and art forms reflected the vibrant experiences of *this* world. They lived a free and spontaneous life full of passions of war and love. Their bards and poets sang robust songs of the joys of victory and the goodness of this life on earth.

The Aryans who came to India were no different. They were strong, heroic and proud of their identity as Aryans. These warriors brought with them into the river valleys of Northwest India some of the songs and poems that later came to be included in the *mantaras* of their religious text the Rg Veda. In the early part of this Veda there was nothing in the Indo-Aryan religious concepts which was contrary in any way to the culture of rest of the Indo-European people. Their hymns addressed to the powers of nature such as *Aditya*, the sun god, *Indra*, the god of rains, *Vayu*, the god

of wind and to *Usas*, the maiden of the dawn, express a positive attitude towards life and show interest in life here and hereafter rather than an anxiety to escape from it.

This world was conceived by them as a place where one could have happiness through the favour of gods. Gold, cattle, sons and grandsons were the objects that the Vedic Aryans prayed for from their gods. There was no idea that the world was a place of misery. There was no yearning to get rid of the body and escape from the shackles of existence. There was no idea of reincarnation, no yearning for release from the vortex of rebirth. In short the oldest known Vedic texts were concerned with enjoyment (*bhukti*) of the earthly world and not with release from it. "It is conceivable," observes Ralph Linton, "that such a people might settle down and become contended cultivators but it is much more difficult to imagine them turning to deep philosophical discussion as the Aryan literature pictures them doing so in India".[1]

In the first and the last books of the Rg Veda, which are of much later interpolation, there are numerous abstract and philosophical hymns which are different in vein. These concepts became the foundation of all later Indian religious philosophy but it is hard to believe that they sprang from the minds of naive, unreflective, rough herdsmen warriors who gloried unabashedly in the strength of their arms. How could the belief in the woeful round of birth and death, which lies at the root of Indian pessimism, capture the imagination of the Aryans and replace the innocent joy in life of the hymns of Rg Veda? This was contrary to the values of the ancient Indo-European people and none of them outside India took to this road.

2. The Intruders Indianised

The answer to the question why did the Indo-Aryans evolve in a direction so different from that which prevailed in Europe or even in the neighbouring Iran? lies in the fact that the intruding Aryans had been Indianised. Some old established civilisations such as that of China and India are like an amoebae: they absorb all elements in their surroundings.

This has happened in India time and again. All successive waves of invaders, till the arrival of Islam with its own iconoclastic and intolerant traditions, found themselves in a teeming land where

all their spiritual values and skills in technology or warfare were of no avail against its hoary religious and cultural traditions. No matter how rapidly they conquered this land or how high and noble their lineage was, they had, in the end, no choice but to mingle their blood with that of the conquered and accept much of their way of life. Even the Muslim invaders to some extent did not escape the all pervading way of Indian life. The coming of Aryans into India was after all only one in a series of such invasions/migrations though they have been the most advertised of all the foreign intruders.

Despite the thunder of the Rg Vedic battle hymns and *Indra's* exploits there is no evidence that the Aryans were able to exterminate wholesale the hated *dasyus* and *dasas*. Besides, the orbit of Harappa civilisation was fairly large and all people living therein could neither have been completely annihilated nor could all traces of their ideology, beliefs and ritual been obliterated from the land. At a very conservative estimate Harappa civilisation in its mature form lasted for about 700 years. A great society like the Harappa civilisation with strong and ancient cultural tradition does not die out unless it falls victim to a total physical annihilation by war and/or genocide. Otherwise such societies can continue for ever and ever though they may have to modify their structure and way of life somewhat to meet new challenges.

As Mircea Eliade has said, "the collapse of an urban civilisation is not equivalent to the simple extinction of its culture but merely to that culture's regression to rural, larval, popular forms"[2]. This is what happened to Harappa civilisation. With the decline of that civilisation in the face of natural forces the people took refuge in the hinterland of India and carried with them their knowledge of agriculture, technology, religion and the rites and rituals connected with it.

Many Aryan speaking tribes entered the sub-continent from time to time. Each new wave of the immigrants differed from the older settlers in customs and even language as they spoke a different dialect of the parent Aryan language. Naturally, apart from fighting the indigenous people, there were internecine quarrels and fighting amongst the old Aryan settlers and the new arrivals over land, water and cattle. Eventually one group from amongst these contestants gained the upper hand and established itself as

the most powerful. This group was represented by the *Kuru* tribes who settled in the area comprising modern Eastern Punjab, Haryana, Northern Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh.

In the past few decades the spade of the archaeologist has laid bare a large number of ancient settlement sites in this area. All these sites are associated with a particular type of ceramics that are called Painted Gray Ware, As mentioned earlier, modern scholars tend to associate PGW with the Aryan *Kuru* tribes. The Aryans called this land *Madhya Desh* or Midland. The archaeological explorations in the past couple of decades have shown that this *madhya desh* or midland of the Aryans was at one time within the eastern domain of Harappa civilisation.

Within this area there are sites such as Banawali, Bara and Siswal etc where there is continuity from the pre-Harappan to Harappan and post -Harappan cultures. Earlier archaeological excavation in this area had revealed a hiatus between the late Harappan and the P.G.W cultures but recent work at these sites, particularly at Bhagwanpura and Dadheri, shows that there was a continuity between the Harappan tradition and the P.G.W culture.

The earliest archaeological remains of the Upper Ganga-Jamuna Doab are represented by Ochre-Coloured-Ware or O.C.P culture whose authors were most probably speakers of Mundari language. This culture begins during the Harappan period and continues into post Harappan and suggests strong affinities with that culture. The O.C.P. culture was succeeded by the Banas culture, centred in Rajasthan, and even this culture was strongly influenced by the Harappan culture.

The fact that these cultures of the Doab were contemporaneous with Harappan culture, both in its mature and late variety, and had been influenced by its technology leads one to believe that some elements of non-technical nature such as mythology and history must have survived amongst them. It has been suggested by Gupta that when a culture declines without any outside violence, as was the case with the Harappan culture, its successor culture or cultures make a conscious effort to preserve not only certain crafts and techniques but also a large corpus of their oral traditions such as mythology and folk songs. "One of the real strengths of such cultures is their wealth of traditional history", states Gupta.

He has also suggested that the roots of iconographic forms that emerged in the plastic arts of later Hindu tradition, such as icons of *Siva, the Bull, Nagas and Yakshas* may be traced back to such oral traditions of the defunct Harappa civilisation[3].

The P.G.W culture that succeeded this melange of cultures could not have remained uninfluenced by them. An example of the survival of an Harappan custom to this day is a tradition amongst married Hindu women to daub the parting of their hair with vermilion. Female figurines recently excavated at the ancient site of Harappa show a streak of vermilion in the hair parting [4].

The migrations of the Aryans into India was a long process extending over generations. It took them best of five hundred years to move from the Khyber pass as semi-nomadic cattle herders to the Ganges-Yamuna Doab to settle as agriculturists in small village communities. During this interval they could scarcely have failed to take on many elements of blood and culture from the older population. This acculturation was in good measure helped by the nature of the Aryan religion itself. It was a religion meant mainly for the chiefs and warriors of the Aryan clans and had nothing much to offer to the general Aryan populace. Outside the walls of the Aryan chief's stockade the natives, including earlier waves of Aryan speaking people, practised a kind of religion which appealed to all and sundry. With the passage of time even the Aryan chiefs and warriors came under the influence of this popular religion.

The influence of the Dravidian language on the language of Rg Veda can be explained only by such an acceptance of the native mores by the Aryan leadership. When two communities speaking different languages are brought together they tend to produce a speech which may bear the stamp of the component languages. In modern times Urdu language provides such an example. Thus the phonemes and the cerebral consonants in the Vedic Sanskrit reflect the pronunciation of the Dravidians trying to learn the language of the technologically superior immigrants.

These traces together with a large number of non-Aryan words and some myths in the Rg Veda indicates that the autochthons were being integrated in the Aryan society. The Rg Veda itself mentions a number of non-Aryan (Harappan ?) chiefs being Aryanised by Indra and the Vedic priests or hymnologists were

not above singing their praises for protecting and giving gifts to them (R.V.8.46.32).

3. Priests in the Aryan Society

It was the Aryan language spoken by the *Kuru* tribes in the midland that eventually became the standard language Sanskrit. It was in this land that the Vedic hymns were collected and compiled into *Samhitas* and it is here that the Brahmins consolidated their priestly powers and gained social supremacy. The institution of Brahmins is unique to the Vedic Aryans. It has no parallel in pre-Christian Indo-European traditions.

The Indo-Europeans as a whole were a nomadic people with no fixed places for worship and in keeping with the traditions of nomads they did not have elaborate institutions of priests. The position of priests within the Indo-European people such as the Greeks, the Romans, the Germans and even the Iranians was least important..

In accordance with their nomadic traditions the early Vedic Aryans did not attach much importance to the office of the priests. As in the case of the Romans, the head of the Indo- Aryan family used to be the chief priest. Every adult member of an Aryan tribe could appeal to *Indra, Varuna, Mitra* or any other god without the intermediary of a priest. The Vedas also inform us that the Aryan chief acted both as a warrior and a priest. In his priestly duties he was no doubt helped by a body of minor priests.. It is worth noting that these minor priests were never addressed as *Brahmans* in the Rg Veda. They are called by such epithets as *karu, vipra, kavi and vedhas* etc. The word *Brahman* occurs in the Rg Veda only once and that too in the famous *Purusasukta* hymn of the last book of the Veda (Rg Veda 10.90) which by all accounts was a much later addition to this *Samhita.*

The Aryan attitude towards these priests was somewhat irreverent and in the Rg Veda they are generally a butt of satire. No wonder this tradition continued in the later Sanskrit drama wherein *Viduska*, the fool in the play, an amiable but gluttonous figure of fun, was invariably a Brahman. If we go by the Rg Vedic evidence the lot of the priests was not a happy one. Some of them bewailed their heart rending poverty. *Vamdeva* describes pitifully how

because of poverty he was forced to eat the boiled entrails of a dog (R.V.4.19.13). One seer cried that his emaciated bones (because of hunger) were clashing like co-wives (R.V.1-105). Another one prayed for the return of his wife abducted by a Kashtriya (R.V.10.109). These and some other hymns prove that the priest was an unsupported individual at the fringe of an Aryan tribe.

4. Brahmans Hoodwinked All to Become Dominant

However, starting from the post-Vedic period, the Brahmans became professional priests par-excellence and assumed a dominant position in the Indo-Aryan and later Hindu society. The scriptures give them a pride of place: A Brahman is the chief of all created beings, his person is inviolate and he is entitled to all honours. These scriptures were of course composed by the Brahamans themselves and gradually they arrogated to themselves the status of divinity on this earth. A passage of the *Satpatha Brahmanna* declares, "there are two kinds of god: first are the gods and then those who are Brahmans and have learnt the Vedas and recite it; they are human gods". Such high pretensions on the part of Brahmins were, as we shall soon see, descended from the actual social status which the priests of Harappa, or for that matter any other riverine civilisation based on agriculture, once enjoyed.

The Brahmans did not even regard themselves as a part of the political State. In presenting a new king to the people they used to proclaim "here, O people, is your new king. He is not our king as our king is the god Soma". How did this turn around came about? What was it that turned the nomadic Aryans into such a priest-ridden society? The answer to this question is simply that the cattle herders of Central Asia on settling down in India became agriculturists. So long as they were stock breeders and herders the potency of their Vedic hymns seemed to work their magic in increasing the progeny of both cattle and their human keepers. But agriculture was entirely a different field and the earliest forms of Vedic religion were ill fitted to farming. The Aryans therefore needed new magic and new gods. The religious aspirations of a semi-nomadic pastoral society do not correspond to those of a sedentary agricultural society. It is at this juncture that the pre-Aryan religious ideas came vividly to their attention.

There is evidence in the Rg Veda itself that the star of the chief and most popular god, *Indra*, began to set even before the completion of the *Samihita* itself. In this connection it has to be remembered that the Aryans had entered an area which had been a seat of a highly developed urban civilisation whose prosperity was based on agriculture and had all the attributes of the riverine civilisations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Elam. It was axiomatic of the ancient world that where ever there were settled agricultural communities the goddess was going to be the primary mythological figure, personifying the energies of nature[5].

Almost all scholars of Harappa culture are in agreement that it was, in the manner of west Asian prototypes, ruled by priests or priest-kings. The Aryans, therefore, borrowed their priests and new gods partially or wholly from the pre-Aryan people. According to late Prof. Kosambi, "there is good reason to believe that the first Brahmans were a result of interaction between the Aryan priesthood and the ritually superior priesthood of the Indus (Harappa) culture" and he goes on to say that, "the Aryan way of life could have given no information about city life, techniques and history. It is difficult to imagine voluminous erudition and mythical traditions of most complicated sort unless the Brahmans had initially some literate and therefore urban background which seems totally absent from the traditions of Vedic Aryans. City life was known only to the non-Aryans".[6] The word for city, *Nagara,* is of Dravidian origin and is not derived from any Sanskrit root. In the Rg Veda (VI.22.10) *Indra* is described as converting *Dasas* into Aryans.

This would show that some Dasa chiefs and priests were given corresponding ranks in the Aryan society. With the passage of time they fully adopted the Aryan way of life to the extent that they even took over the task of composing the sacred hymns of the *Rg Samhita* itself. Such Vedic seers as *Dhrigatma,* composer of hymn 1.164.20, *Kanva,* the composer of Book VIII, and *Angiras* yet another Vedic seer, are all described straight away or by implication as black in the Veda.. *Kavasa*, the son of *Ilusa*, a slave woman, is said to have been raised to the status of Brahamana (A.B2.8.1; K.B.12.3). Similarly, the authorship of *Aitareya Brahmana* text is attributed to *Mahidasa,* the son of a slave woman. While some others seers like *Vasistha* are called sons of

their mothers or born out of pots which are symbols of Mother Goddess. Since the Aryans belonged to the patriarchal system this could only mean that the Brahmans came into the Aryan fold from the Dravidian stock who till today continue to practice some sort of matriarchy.

Of all the Brhamanical clans the *Bhrgus* or *Bhargavas* present rather a strange picture. The first thing one notices about them is the confusion about their class role. In the Rg Veda they appear to be amongst the Aryan and the non-Aryan enemies of the Aryan king, *Sudas*, in the celebrated battle of the ten kings (RV.7.18), but in later literature, particularly the epic *Mahabharata*, they appear to be the most important Brhamanical clan In fact they appear to have appropriated the original *Bharata* lays from the bards and turned them into *Mahabharata* for their own glory and that of their non-Aryan clients the *Pandavas and the Andhka-Vrisni* tribes who are in fact termed as *vratya* in the Epic.

From the myths in that epic the *Bhrugs* appear to be quite an unconventional lot and their behaviour often deviates from the norms set forth in the *dharma* literature of their fellow Brahmins. They indulge in violence and *Parasurama*, one of the most important *Bhrgus*, is the most violent character in Sanskrit literature. They openly bear hostility towards the Aryan gods and intermarry with other *varnas*. Some of the *Bhrgu* sages are shown in the epic to have engaged in such activities as thievery, imbibing of hard liquors, abduction and killing of women. One of the greatest of the *Bhrgus*, *Sukara* who is always associated with *Siva*, is said to have served as chief priest of the *Asuras*, the enemies of the Aryans. Besides, the *Bhrgus* also indulge in sorcery and bring the dead back to life. Four of them. *Cyavana, Sukra. Sukra's* mother, and *Vipula* use black magic or yogic powers in order to humiliate the gods of the Aryan pantheon.

In one of the stories told in the *Jaiminiya Brahmana* (J.B.3.120-29) *Cyavana* is depicted as a dirty old man who lusts after a young beautiful girl *Sukanya* and forces her to marry him through the magical phallic powers symbolised by a black snake. He coerces Indra through his magical powers to grant share of *Soma* sacrifice to the *Asvins* who were hitherto not entitled to it. Because of these strange characteristics of the *Bhrgus*, Weller had concluded that they were the "primal race" of India, the inhabitant of

Mohenjodaro, who under the leadership of *Parasurama* staged a campaign of social and legal equality with Aryans[7]. Kosambi has gone so far as to say that of all the Rg Vedic seers *Visvamitra* was the one and only true Aryan.

Aside from the hymn makers there is yet another class of people, shamans or medicine men, found in the Rg Veda who are called *Munis*, the silent ones. A hymn of the Rg Veda (10.136) describes a *Muni* with long hair, stark naked and covered with brown filth. They were mostly associated with Proto-Siva of Harappa culture, who was later merged with the Vedic god *Rudra*, and lived on the margin of Aryan society. They knew the virtues of herbs and are said to possess the power of levitation. Basham believes that these *Munis* were the survivors of some pre-Aryan fraternity of ascetics and were later became loosely associated with the Brahmanic religion.[8]. It is interesting to note that the term *Muni* suggesting ascetic of special sanctity was exclusively adopted by the Jainas whose religion can be traced to Harappa culture.

There are some other mystical personages in the Vedic literature such as *Vratyas* in whom some scholars have sought the forerunners of the *yogins* of non-Aryan origin. These *Vratyas* wore turbans, which harks back to Indus valley civilisation as the Aryans did not use this head gear. According to Vedic sources they were not brahmanical in culture and spoke a different language but had learnt Sanskrit which they spoke with a different accent. The *Atharva Veda* described the *Vratyas* as priests of a non-Aryan cult which involved ritual dancing and flagellation. According to Carpentier the *Vratayas* were early worshipper of *Siva*. They are classed by the epic *Mahabharata* as outcasts of society like the abortionists, pimps and adulterers.

They were apparently a powerful group and were treated with great respect and veneration by the Brahmanical society because of some religious sanctity attached to them. The sacred traditions of these *Vratyas* are preserved in an entire book titled *"Vratya"* of the *Athrava Veda* (XV). This book is made up of "rhythmic" litanies which are quite different from other Vedic verse. Apart from this book there are some other portions of the *Athrava Veda*, such as books VIII, XII and XIII, which also supply information about this order of ascetics. It appears from this text that these *Vratyas* practised various kinds of asceticism and abstinences which

generated experience of rapture and ecstasy. They were familiar with the discipline of the breaths (*yogic pranayam*), identified their bodies with the macrocosm. They had a priest or shaman called *magadha* who was accompanied by a *pumscali* - a prostitute. On festive occasion called *mahavrata* this *pumscali* engaged in ritual sexual intercourse with the *magadha*. All these practices suggest Tantarism and *Yoga* which were of Harappan inspiration.

According to Karmarker the *Vrataya* cult as represented in the *Atharva Veda* and later literature exhibits some connecting links with the civilisation of Harappa [9]. The Brahmins devised a special type of sacrifice, the *Vratyastoma,* to integrate this community of mystics into the Aryan society. They were probably one of the most important source of the new doctrines and practices in the Aryan cultus. At the same time, because of the presence and deep influence of these ascetics, *Munis* and other types of pre-Aryan shamans, the Aryan sacrificial religion with its friendly gods suffered a devaluation and a critical shift of weight from outer universe and tangible spheres of body to the inner and intangible reaches of mind began to take place in the Aryan society. Henceforth, in contrast to the positive Aryan attitude towards life, "All is suffering, all is transitory" became the leitmotiv of religion. The beginning of this esoteric turn of mind is to be found in the *Brahamana* texts and the *Upnisadas*.

Long before the discovery of Harappa civilisation, Paul Deussen, a pupil of Schopenhaurs, had suggested that the difference between *Vedic* and *Upanisdic* thought was so great that the latter could not have been derived from the former. According to Joseph Campbell, "there can be no doubt about it that an alien constellation has made itself known to the Brahmins and is in the process of assimilation. Nor can it be doubted that the background of this influence stands revealed in the cities of the Indus valley"[10] These so called alien influences changed the content, texture and tone of the religious sensibilities of the Aryan immigrants beyond recognition over the next few centuries and laid the foundations of what we call classical Hinduism.

5. The Assimilation of the Aryans and the Non-Aryans

As a result of gradual institutional assimilation and socio-cultural integration between the Aryans and the non-Aryans, it was

inevitable that the later Vedic texts, the counterpart of P.G.W culture, would reflect an admixture of the myths of the Vedic people and the indigenous stock. Some of the myths of this kind have been alluded to in a previous chapter. The most important text of this period is the *Atharva-veda.* This Veda is the last to be added to the Vedic corpus .

It appears that there was some reluctance on the part of Aryan priesthood to accept this text as a part of the Vedic corpus which for long time had been called *Triyayi Vidya* - consisting the *mantra* collections of the *Hotri, Udgatri* and *Adhvaryu* priests in the three Samihitas of *Rg*, *Sam* and *Yajur*. There was no mention of a fourth class of *mantras* later found in the *Atharva Veda.* It required a special category of priestly champions to gain recognition for the *Atharvan mantras* to be used as their Veda alongside the *trayi-vidya.* This occurred only when the early Aryan sacrifice became highly complex and elaborate and the aforementioned three categories of priests were supplemented by a chief or supervisory priest called the Brahmin. The Brahmin's job was that of an overseer who followed the details of ritual performance and correct any mistakes committed by the other three priests. In the performance of this task the Brahmin priest used his special *mantras* collected in the *Athrva Veda.* In this way the Brahmin priest not only raised the magic formulas of this Veda to the status of sacrificial *mantras* of the *trayi -vidya* but also established himself as the chief of the priests without whom no sacrifice could be completed.

According to Whitney the *Atharva* might have been added to the Vedic corpus even later than the 10th *manadala* of the Rg Veda though the contents of this *manadala* stand connected in import and origin with the *Atharva samhita.* However. even after being included in the sacred *srauta* literature it was never accorded the full recognition of the *Soma* cult.

The *Atharvaveda* has practically no connection with sacrifice except in its last portion which is derived from the Rg Veda. The rites and rituals described in this Veda do not involve the Aryan *Devas* at all. It is chiefly concerned with magic, spells and demonology intended either to injure enemies, drive away disease or to bring prosperity and long life etc. Some of the rites and rituals of this Veda bear a striking similarity to those of Tantarism. Some

of the gods mentioned in it are not found in the Rg Veda. According to Hindu tradition this Veda is supposed to have been composed by the *Saindhvas* on the banks of the Indus (Harappans?) [11]. It was most probably composed by *Bhrgus* because it is commonly referred to as *Bhrgvaangirasa*, that is, the Veda of the *Bhrgus* and the *Angirasas*. In a passage of the Rg Veda god Indra is described as admitting the *Angirasas* into the cowpen of the Aryans. This means that the people in question were of non-Aryan origin.

If Weller is right in identifying the *Bhrgus* as the descendants of the Harappans then they could be the *Saindhvas* of the Hindu tradition referred to above. The tone and texture of this Veda as well as the *10th manadala* of the Rg Veda expresses a spirit different from the other Vedas. In the earlier Vedas the gods were approached with love and confidence. The divinities of the *Atharava* on the other hand were regarded with a kind of cringing fear as powers whose wrath was deprecated and whose favours were curried. The *mantras* of older Vedas were instruments of love and devotion but in the *Atharava* they were nothing but tools to wring favours from the unwilling hands of the gods. Thus, this Veda reflects the attitude of the Sumero-Akkadian populace towards their gods. This is not surprising in that some of the pre-Aryan deities and cults were of Mesopotamian and Elamite provenance. There is a *mantara* in the *Atharavaveda* the intent of which is to ward of the effects of snake venom.

The priest-magician addressed the snake in the following words: " *Aligi* is your father and *Viligi* is your mother. you are the daughter of *Taimat* and *Urgula*". These words had hitherto remained meaningless abracadabra of a magician's stock in trade and even the lexicographer *Yaska* of the 6th century B.C.E had no clue to their exact meaning, However, modern research shows that the last word *urgula* in Sumerian language means " the physician of the city of Ur" and a tablet discovered in the ruins of the ancient city of Ur in Sumer (Iraq) has disclosed that a pre-diluvian dynasty of kings of Ur had two rulers by the name of *Elulu* and *Belulu* the originals of the aforementioned words *aligi* and *viligi*[12]. As to *Tiamat* she along with *Apsu* were, respectively, fresh water and salt water deities of the Babylonian epic of creation, *Enuma Elish*, who engendered a host of other deities notably *Marduk*, the chief

god of the Babylonians, and *Ea* or *Enki*, the god of wisdom, who created mankind and whose abode was the waters.

This shows that *Atharvaveda*, though last to be included in the Vedic *samhitas*, was much older in content going back to the Sumero-Elamite impact on the Harappa civilisation. Before the discovery of this civilisation Bloomfield had observed that the material contained in this Veda was the product of an independent tradition that had alluded the collectors of the other Vedas, the Rg Veda not excluded[13] In this connection C.K Raja has also opined thus,." if one may risk an opinion, it may be stated that the *Athrava Veda* represents a current of Indian culture that runs parallel to the current represented by the other Vedas; and that it is an earlier stage of a current that culminated in the *Agma* (non Vedic), and *Tantra* literature."[14] The *Atharavaveda* portrayed the way of life of the indigenous pre-Aryan people of the entire Indus valley. These pre-Vedic traditions were largely female oriented. Thus the traditions of Harappa civilisation were made a part of the Vedic traditions via this text by the pre-Aryan priesthood integrated in the Aryan society and paved the way for the triumphant return of the Great Mother in later centuries.

6. The Decline of the Vedic Cult

The country around the Midland was inhabited by non-Aryan descendants of the lost Harappa civilisation and some Aryan tribes who were not so thoroughly subjected to religious influence of the Brahmins as their kindred of Midland were. It was for this reason that the *Kuru* tribes looked down upon the inhabitants of those areas and called them barbarians. It has already been mentioned that the Western Punjab was no longer held to be a sacred land. According to the sacred literature composed in the Midland the people of Eastern India such as *Magadha, Anga. Vanga* and *Kalinga* were likewise denigrated as *mlecchas*.

It is in the areas beyond the boundaries of the *Madhyadesha* that the old religious attitudes and philosophies of *Sankhya-Yoga* continued to prevail despite the fact that the civilisation that spawned them had disappeared long time ago.. Buddhism and Jainism as well as other schools of thought such the Ajivikas etc arose in those areas which were least influenced by the Vedic-Brahmanical lore, and were based on the aforementioned

Harappan philosophies and they brought an immense influence to bear upon the Vedic religion itself to transform it into an entirely new concept. The religious aspects of later Vedic literature inasmuch as it differed from the Rg Veda include a large amount of practices and beliefs, both at the level of ritual and deities, of the pre-Aryans.

The Vedic cults had thus begun fading away even before the dawn of historical periods symbolised by the rise of imperial powers in Magadha and the new religions of Buddha and Mahavira that openly rejected the authority of the Vedas and opposed the supremacy of the Brahmins. The Aryans themselves had succumbed to the alien philosophies and cults surrounding them. Thus when the Greeks, another branch of the Indo-European family, were beginning to develop the primary structures of classical Western civilisation based on the categorisation of knowledge of the observed phenomenon, the Indo-Aryans were shifting their concentration from the outer world to the inner reaches of mind by utilising the psychological, physical and metaphysical techniques of *Sankhya-Yoga* - the tools provided by the extinct Harappa Culture.

The sturdy horsemen of the Eurasian steppes had arrived in India chanting magically potent hymns to a pantheon of friendly gods. There was nothing in these hymns to suggest a belief in reincarnation, no yearning for release from the vortex of rebirth, no *Yoga* and no mythology of salvation. But in a short time the songs they sang to celebrate the buoyant life and will to power on this earth were stilled and the warrior horsemen succumbed to the native philosophy wherein suffering always outweighed pleasure, sorrow predominated over happiness and negative outweighed the positive The decline of the Aryans is exemplified by the downfall of their once mighty chief god Indra.

Rg Veda describes a battle between Indra and a cosmic dragon *Vritra*, who had hoarded to himself the waters of the world and the universe deprived of this precious liquid had become a waste land, in the following words:

> Like a vehement bull he took to himself the *Soma*,
>
> Drank the pressed drink from three mighty bowls,

Picked up his weapon, the mighty bolt,

And slew the first born dragon.

In this episode the victory was entirely of Indra without any assistance from any quarter. However, in retelling this story the epic *Mahabharta* suggests that on seeing the cosmic dragon, *Indra* was paralysed and stupefied by fear. He was revived by sage *Vasishta* who recited potent Vedic chants in his ears and reminded him that he was chief god of the Aryans. At the same time *Siva* 'Lord of the universe' by his maya made *Vritra* sick and *Visnu* entered the weapon of *Indra* to make it more lethal. *Indra then performed yoga for sixty thousand years* to dispel *Vritra's* magic which had stupefied him and then he took to battle and killed the dragon.

Except for the name of the hero god there is nothing in this narration to suggest of the old glory of *Indra.* The glory now belongs to *Siva, Visnu and Vasishtha* and Indra is now no more than a puppet whose courage is derived from *Yoga* and not *Soma.* The real victory belongs to *Siva* and *Visnu.*

On top of it all, the dragon *Vritra* was declared to be a Brahmin. Since Brahminicide was considered to be heinous crime *Indra,* in order to escape from the punishment for such a crime, had to hide himself for centuries in a lotus stalk till *Brhaspati* rescued him by performing the *Asvamedha* sacrifice. In the *Puranic* literature Indra is reviled as a deceiver and an adulterer. This clearly shows that the religion and mythology of later India does not so much derive from the Vedas as it owes its inspiration to a theology in which *Yoga* played a prominent role. And as we have discussed above the source of this theology was Harappa civilisation.

References

1. Ralph Linton - Tree of Culture - Alfred Knoff New York 1955 - p.479.
2. Mircea Eliade - Yoga - Immortality & Freedom - 1971 - p.358
3. S.P.Gupta - A Study in Cultural Dynamics - Possehl Edition of HarappaCivilization 1992- p.54-55.

4. Jonathan Mark Kenoyer - opp.cited. p.44.
5. Joseph Campbell - Masks of God - Primitive Mythology- Viking 1970 p. 145.
6. D.D. Kosambi - Introduction to the Study of Indian History - Bombay 1958 - p.104.
7. F.Weller - Whc Were the Bhriguids? - quoted by Robert P.Goldman in Gods, Priests and Warriors- Columbia University Press 1977 - p.142.
8. A.L.Basham - The Origin & Development of Classical Hinduism - 1989 p.16.
9. A.P.Karmarker - The Religions of India Vol.1 & Religion & Philosophy of the Epics - Cultural Heritage of India - Vol.2 - p.80.
10. Joseph Campbell - Masks of God - Oriental Mythology - p.205.
11. John Dowson - Classical Dictionary - London 1928 - p.350.
12. B.S.Upadhyaya - Feeders of Indian Culture - New Delhi 1989 - p.14.
13. Bloomfield - Quoted by B.K.Ghosh - Cultural Heritage of India - Calcutta 1958 - Vol.1. p.237.
14. C.K. Raja - ibid . p.210.

The Dawn of Hinduism : A New Beginning

10

1. The Non-Aryan Theistic Sects

The Aryans did not land themselves in a religious vacuum. Although the urban civilisation of the Indus valley had run its course when they arrived in north west India, the newcomers did indeed meet and mingle with the heirs of that civilisation in settled agricultural communities in East Punjab, North Rajasathan and the Doab. These descendants of the Harappans, or other tribal groups heavily indebted to the Harappan material and religious culture, had continued to observe their ancient religious traditions. The decline of the Aryan cultus led in turn to a powerful resurgence of those indigenous religions and a two fold reaction ensued: an atheistic movement spearheaded by Jainsim and Buddhism, which almost dealt a death blow to the religion of the Vedas,. and a theistic movement which taught devotion to a personal god as a sure way for salvation. These theistic sects were destined to play a major role in the formation of classical Hinduism in later centuries.

The first important theistic sect was *Bhagvata* religion founded by *Vasudeva* who was, as described in the epic *Mahabharata*, a hero of the *Vrsni* clan who later became a leader of a religious movement and was deified and styled as *Bhagvat.*

The *Bhagvata* religion was a religion of devotional faith in a personal God. It was essentially, as devotion to a personal God implies, a monotheistic faith. This kind of a religious attitude was incompatible to the pantheistic Vedic thought as embodied in the *Upnisadas*. It was in fact based on a modified version of *Sankhya-Yoga* philosophy. This system, as we have seen, was based on pure atheism and did not particularly concerns itself with ethics. The *Bhagvata* religion, on the other hand, not only believed in one God but was also strongly ethical in character. The *Bhagvatas* modified the Sankhya-Yoga system by adding a God to it and

borrowed its philosophic content and terminolgies to suite their own purpose. The one God of the *Bhagvatas, the Adorable*, is also called *Purusha* and its theory of creation is all based on *Sankhya* speculations. Thus according to the *Bhagvatas, the Adorable*, the Unconditioned One, first produced from himself *prakriti*, the indiscreet primal matter (of the *Sankhya*) and a conditioned spirit known as *samkarasna*. From the association of *samkarasna* with *prakriti* there sprang *manas* corresponding to the *Sankhya's buddhi* and at the same time *samkarasana* produced another conditioned spirit *pradyumna*. From the association of this spirit with *manas* was created *ahankara*, the egoity, till all the categories enumerated by *Sankhya* were produced.

There was yet another minor sect prevalent in the Mathura region which was centred on *Krishna*, a deified tribal hero of the *Yadva* clan. According to some scholars this *Krishna* was the same *Devakiputra Krishna* who was mentioned as a pupil of the Upnisadic teacher *Ghora Angirasa* (C.U. 3.17.1). Since the *Vrisnis* and the *Yadavas* were related to each other the two groups seem to have combined under some political or religious dispensation. This resulted in the merger of the divine *Vasudeva* and *Krishna* to form one God of the *Bhagvata* faith. Henceforth the two names came to be used indiscriminately to denote the same Divinity.

The sect was further swelled by absorbing the cult of *Gopal-Krsna* which had originated in the cowherd clans of nomadic Abhiras who had entered India from some where in Central Asia either along with or in the wake of the Sythic tribes. At the same time the Brahminic leaders of the Vedic lore, scared to death by the success of atheistic religions of Jains and the Buddhists, eagerly embraced this increasingly popular non-Aryan faith and by creating suitable myths identified *Bhagvat-Vasudeva-Krshna* with Vedic *Visnu*. From this amalgam there developed, in time, a more rational, enlightened and intellectual *Vaisnaism* whose best known scripture, which is also the most beloved sacred book of the Hindu elites, is the *Bhagvat Geeta*. The metaphysical basis of this beloved scripture is the *Sankhya* understanding of the world.

The second sect arose from the ancient *Muni-Yati* cult with its characteristic features such as *yoga* and *sanyasa* which were an essential components of a pre-Vedic god, *Pasupati*, the *proto-Siva* of the Harappa seals. This was the sect of *Pasupatas* who

worshipped *Siva* as the supreme being, infinite and eternal who brings about the dissolution and regeneration of the world process in endless cycles. His supreme creative power was celebrated in the worship of his *Lingam* or phallus. This sect is mentioned in the epic *Mahabharata* where it is stated that *Siva* himself was believed to have been the first preceptor of the system. According to the *Pasupatas*, *Siva* revealed five categories of soul's obtaining release from the bonds of earthly existence: (i) *Karya*, or effect that which is not independent; (ii) *Karana* or cause that is independent; (iii) *Yoga* involving cessation from action; (iv) *Vidhi* or conduct and (v) *Dukhanta* or final deliverance.

The sect of *Pasupatas* tended towards being mystical, instinctual and orgiastic. Out of this doctrine developed two extreme schools, the *Kalamukhas* (Black Faced) and *Kapalikas* ((worshippers of the skull bearer - *Siva*) and a moderate sect of *Saivas* or *Sidhantas* whose development led to the modern *Saivaism*.

Although these two theistic religions were contemporaneous with Buddhism, the early Buddhist scriptures make no mention of them.. The first reference to the early form of *Vaisnavism*, that is, *Bhagvatism*, occurs in Panini's 5th century B.C.E grammar, *Ashtadhyayi* (IV.3.98) where he explains that the name of *Vasudeva* is not to be taken as the name of a *Kashtriya* hero but as the designation of the *Adorable One*, the *Bhagvat*. Panini also explains that the word *Vasudevka* should be interpreted in the sense of the one whose object of adoration, *Bhakti*, is *Vasudeva*.

Reference to *Siva* is much later. In the 4th century B.C.E the Greek settlers of Northwest India refer to the two gods worshipped by the Indians of that region as *Heracles* and *Dionysus* who have been identified with *Vasudeva-Krishna* and *Siva* respectively. The lack of much information about these two gods in the pre-Christian era shows that during the hey days of Buddhism the religions associated with them occupied a modest position and that too amongst the country folks. But it appears that the orthodox Brahamins had already started integrating these two religions with their own. The epic *Mahabharta* was the vehicle utilised by them for this end.

Although this epic is devoted largely to the glorification of *Vaisnavism* and its preceptor *Vasudeva-Krishna*, it also gives

importance to *Siva* who is declared, in some passages, to be superior to *Visnu*

2. Theistic Sects Assimilated Into Brahmanism

By the time of early Gupta period the new theistic sects had been harmonised with the old Vedic religion and the two sects of *Vaisnavisn and Saivism* were fully recognised as part of the orthodox religion. It will be noticed that there was nothing Vedic about these sects and that their precepts were all of pre- Aryan inspiration. Their scriptures were also categorised as *Agma*, i.e., belonging to the non-Vedic tradition as opposed to *Nigma* the Vedic tradition proper.

The question is why did the haughty Brahmins embrace these two non-Vedic sects so readily? The only possible explanation could be that with the decline of Aryan cults the prestige of the Brahmins also suffered.

The masses rose against their large scale animal sacrifices on both economic and humanitarian grounds and they started questioning their pretensions to superiority by virtue of their birth. The heterodox religions of Jainism and Buddhism were openly opposed to this birthright claimed by the Brahmins. It is said that in one of his sermons Buddha declared that man to man and woman to woman the Brahmins were inferior to the Kashatriyas. These developments made the Brahmins highly nervous and they were anxious to keep themselves in positions of power. As Sir Charles Elliot has said," The guiding principle of the Brahmins has always been not so much that they have a particular creed to enforce, as that whatever the creed of India, they must be its ministers".[1]

The two sects of *Pasupatas and Bhagwatas* were theistic and were not overtly inimical to the Vedas or to the Brahmins. By identifying *Pasupati* with the Vedic *Rudra* and *Vasudeva-Krishna* with the *Visnu* the Brahmins paved the way for their acceptance by and complete integration with the orthodox religion under their ministrations. In this process of integration it was the orthodox religion of the Vedas which had to give in to the precepts and practices of the new sects.

After having been satiated and intoxicated with Buddhism, India swung back to the orthodox religion round about the middle of the

first millennium of the current era. However, by that time the religion of the Rg Veda had undergone a sea change and had become a kind of ecumenical alliance of various sects united only in their belief in the Veda - a belief insisted upon by the Brahmins on all sects who wanted to be a part of the mainstream religion - although it had become a mere name. But a name of high authority, that was often invoked and was highly revered. But its religion, its gods and its rites had become a thing of the past. The new dispensations were quite at variance with the Vedic thought and the devotees of the new religions bore no resemblance to their remote Aryan ancestors.

Having absorbed *Vaishnavism* and *Siavism* and numerous gods and godlings of earlier times the Brahmins had evolved an altogether new theism in which the attitude of self knowledge and introspection taught by the *Upanishads* was replacéd by one of faith and devotion *(Bhakti)* to a personal god - *Siva* or *Visnu* depending upon the choice of the worshipper. The great gods of the Vedas - *Varuna, Indra, Mitra.Vayu* and others did not have any significant place in this religion. They were degraded to the to the rank of *lokpalas.* the world guardians.

Indra became a vague rain deity who ruled over a bunch of *apsaras* in his heaven *Indra-loka.* The great *Varuna* was reduced to a god of the sea. The other gods such as *Pusan, Vayu and Usas* were completely forgotten. The Vedic mode of sacrifice *(Yajana)* to these gods therefore disappeared and was replaced by *Puja*, a decidedly Dravidian (Harappan) practice. The Aryan socio-religious class system, reinforced by the Harappan doctrines of Caste, *Karma* and *Sansara,* were now fully entrenched. Besides *Visnu* and *Siva*, a host of new gods such as *Ganesa, Kartikya, Dharma, Vaivasvat, Kama* had made their appearance. Histories and mythologies of this new pantheon of divine beings were told and retold and glories sung in the *Puranas* . The great gods *Brahma* , *Visnu* and *Siva* now formed the official trinity of major gods.

The gods and godlings of old had surrendered their personality traits and attributes to one or the other member of this trinity. Of these three gods only *Brahma* was related to the Vedic religion. *Brahma* as a god is unknown to the Rg Veda. His mythology seems to have developed during the period of Brahamana texts and Upnisadas (circa 1000-600 B.C.E) and represents the orthodox

Aryan thinking.. But even during this period the fame and fortune of his two rival gods, *Visnu* and *Siva*, was rapidly rising. It is quite clear from the *Puranas*, the *Epics* and certain *Upanisdic* passages that with the triumph of classical Hinduism the star of *Brahma* completely waned and that he was definitely inferior to his two rivals or the Goddess.

He was most probably added to the trinity to satisfy the Brahmanical pride. But he did not occupy any prominent place in the actual religious devotion of the people. He was overshadowed right from the beginning by the other two gods and the goddess who were central figures in the new religion. *The Puranas* recite endless stories of these divinities telling among others how the Vedic gods like *Indra* seek their protection against *Asuras* and other demons. This was also the period in which the doctrine of *Avataras* or incarnations of *Visnu* came into vogue. Two of these incarnations, viz., *Krishna* and *Rama* were destined to play a leading role in the devotional religion.

The greatest deviation from the older religion was, however, in the mode of worship. During the period under review worship of idols and images of the new pantheon of gods and goddesses in temples came into vogue. The people of the Vedas and the *Upnishads* did not have any temple, any sculpture nor any idols. The physical aspect of the Vedic gods no doubt was anthropomorphic but they had very shadowy forms and their limbs or parts were often meant figuratively to describe their activities. As the outward form of the Vedic gods was conceived very vaguely, we find no mention in the Rg Veda of the images of gods. We also find no mention of temples and idols in the earlier and more authoritative *Brahmanas* which lay down in meticulous details the rituals of various sacrifices.

Later on when temples and image worship had become an essential part of the religion, the literature of this genre was not lacking in such details, On the other hand we know it well that the cult of symbols such as *yoni and lingam* and images of Mother Goddess was an essential part of the religious practices of the Harappans. In this connection the following observation made by Majumdar is relevant. "The glyptic and other antiquarian remains of pre-historic sites of the Sindhu valley seem to suggest that it (image worship) was in vogue among the earliest inhabitants of India

who were pre-Vedic and quite distinct from the Aryan immigrants"[2].

In fact the first surviving stone images of Hinduism are dated to the end of the Mauryan period. These images do not represent any great gods but local chthonic earth or fertility divinities so familiar to us from Harappa culture. One can find such divinities in the Indian countryside even to-day. They are often represented by shapeless stones encrusted with layer upon layers of *sindur.* The worship of such local deities called *gramdevatas* together with worship of sacred animals, snakes and trees, such as *pipal, tulsi,* which is sacred to *Visnu,* and *bilva* which is sacred to *Siva,* that was common to the people of Harappa civilisation, continues to be part of the folk religions of the country side of India to this day.

3. The Return of the Great Mother

Yet another development of most profound import that took place in the new religion during this period was the return of the Great Mother of Harappa civilisation. One of the most striking features of contemporary Hinduism is the importance of the worship of goddess. The number and popularity of goddesses are remarkable. In fact no other religion provides such a rich source of mythology, theology and worship of female divinities as does Hinduism.

These divinities illustrate important concepts that underlie the great philosophic visions of Hindu tradition. It is the belief of traditional scholarship that the Vedas are the foundation and the sacred source of Hinduism. It is therefore surprising that goddess worship does not play a central role in the Vedic literature and no goddess of great popularity or prominence appears in these texts. The authors of the Vedas were semi-nomadic pastoralists. In such an economy there is a natural tendency towards a social organisation in which males dominate. Therefore, the deities of the hunting and pastoral people are predominantly male. It is the male deities such as *Indra, Agni and Soma, Varuna, Mitra,* etc. who dominate the Rg Vedic religion and are repeatedly praised in it.

There are some goddesses in the Vedic literature but they occupy a very subordinate position in the Aryan thought and worship and none of them is central to Rg Vedic vision of reality. None of

them can stand comparison with or rival the great male gods. They are mentioned infrequently and, therefore, must have played only an insignificant role in the Aryan religion. Such goddesses are *Prithvi, Aditi, Sarasvati,* and *Nirrti* etc. *Prithvi* is rarely addressed alone: she is always coupled with *Dyaus*, the deity associated with the sky. Together they are said to be the universal parents who created the world. *Aditi*, who is said to be the mother of gods, is mentioned about eighty times in the Rg Veda but always along with other gods and goddesses. Not even a single hymn is addressed to her alone. *Sarasvati* is a river goddess who much later became the goddess of inspiration, eloquence, learning and music. *Nirrti* is a minor goddess associated with ill luck, pain and destruction.

In terms of number of hymns addressed to her *Usas* is the most popular Vedic goddess. But, as Kosambi has suggested, she was a non-Aryan Mother Goddess whose cult, centred on the river Beas in the Punjab, was destroyed by no less a personage than *Indra* himself.[3] However, due to the influence of the neo-Aryan priestly class she was given a place in the Rg Veda. One may not agree with this but there is a hint, just a hint, that she may be of non-Aryan origin. In contrast to the generally optimistic outlook of the Rg Vedic hymns there is a touch of sadness and impermanence of life, a characteristic of non-Aryan Harappan thought, in the hymns addressed to this goddess. One hymn (R.V.1.1242.2) pointedly refers to the way in which she cuts short the lives of men: "Obeying the behests of the gods, but wasting away the lives of mortals, Usas has shone forth - the last of the many former dawns and first of those that are yet to come"

She was only a deity of third rank and she never received a share in the *Soma* offering. The most important goddesses of later tradition such as *Kali, Durga, Candi, Uma* etc. are conspicuous by their absence in the Vedic texts. None of the Vedic goddesses were associated with blood sacrifice or battle as were some of the aforementioned deities of the later tradition. And lastly, there is no one great goddess in the Vedic literature which could stand comparison to *Mahadevi* of later Hinduism. There is only one Vedic goddess, *Sri* or *Lakshmi*, the *Lotus* Goddess, who has some of the qualities of the Mother Goddess of antiquity. She is invoked to bring fame and prosperity, abundance of horses, cattle, and

food. She is associated with moisture and fertility and abundant harvest, growth and fecundity. However she does not appear in the early Vedic literature. Of all the 1068 hymns of the Rg Veda not one is addressed to her. She appears only in one late and apocryphal hymn in a *Khila* or an appendix said to have been added to the Veda shortly before the time of the Buddha.

In this appendix of the Rig Veda she is addressed both as *Sri* and *Lakshmi* and is called *prajanam bhavasi mata,* the mother of all created beings. As Zimmer has suggested, like the lotus plant itself, which is a product of the vegetation of India proper, she represents the local development of the concept of the old great Mother Earth of chalcolithic period, the Magna Mater of antiquity [4]. The figurine of the Mother Goddess recovered from Harappa shows her wearing a lotus in her hair. She appears, or one should say reappears, in the earliest Buddhist sculpture at Sanchi and Bharhut. At Bharhut she is shown as a broad- hipped, round breasted patroness of fertility and maternal benevolence, sitting on a lotus flower, and being bathed by an elephant on her each side from a pitcher held in its trunk. In this pose she is referred to as *gajalakshmi.* Thereafter she is visible every where in the monuments of not only Buddhism but also classical Hinduism.

An agricultural society has to depend on many powers involving fertility of land and kine and therefore has different gods and these gods are mostly of feminine persuasion. As Joseph Campbell has suggested, "where you have agriculture as the base, the goddess is going to be the primary mythological figure, personifying the energies of nature which transform semen into child and seed into produce."[5] It is noteworthy that when the Aryans took to agriculture they not only borrowed agricultural terminology from the indigenous people but also the deities connected with it. A Rg Vedic Hymn (IV.57.6-7) invokes the goddess of the furrow, *Sita,* in such words, "Beautiful *Sita*, we glorify thee that thou mayest be the giver of abundant wealth to us, that thou mayest yield abundant fruit...May you well stored with water yield it like milk year after year". Such a prayer could only be expressed by people among whom the worship of a Mother Goddess, who is connected with agriculture and is the giver of bountiful crops, had survived. And they were the descendants of the agricultural people of the Indus valley and not the Aryans.

It also shows that the worship of the Harappan Mother Goddess had started making, ever so gradually, its way into the Aryan way of life. However , since patriarchal element was still very strong goddesses like *Sita*, and perhaps some others like *Asa, Arada, Anagha*, etc. apparently of Dravidian origin with Sanskritized names, were made subordinate to the male gods such as *Indra* and *Pusan* etc. The days of these gods were however numbered as the pastoral economy that generated these gods was no longer there in the post Vedic period to nourish them. The Vedic gods had no alternative but to stage an exit to make way for the triumphant return of the Great Mother of the non-Aryan indigenous people whose cult, rooted in the vanished Harappa culture, had been overshadowed for over a thousand years by the patriarchal Aryan pantheon. The return of the goddess would, as we shall see, expose the gods of the Aryans as puny in wisdom and physical power .

4. The Aryans Yield to Older Tradition

The earliest known text in which the great Mother Goddess appears for the first time, and reveals her superiority to the Aryan gods is the post Vedic *Kena Upanisad* which is dated to about 600 B.C.E. This is a philosophical treatise in which the orthodox Brahmanical traditions of sacrificial rituals seems to yield to the non-Aryan conceptions which the Aryans had despised and ignored so hautily. The story as related by this *Upnisad* is that once upon a time *Brahman* won a great victory for the gods over demons. They in their ignorance believed that the victory was theirs and so was the glory ensuing from it.

Brahman was apparently annoyed by this conceit and decided to appear before them. And when he did so in the form of a spirit none of the gods recognised or knew him. They asked *Agni*, their priest, to find out what that spirit was. As *Agni* approached, the spirit questioned him "who art thou?" and *Agni* replied that he was the god of fire and could burn everything on this earth. The spirit then placed a blade of grass before *Agni* and asked him to burn it. But *Agni* despite his best efforts could not do so and retired shame facedly and told his fellow gods that he had failed to comprehend the nature of the spirit. They then deputed *Vayu*, the wind god, to solve this enigma. He too failed to move the blade of grass placed before him by the spirit though he waxed

mightily in his effort. Then the gods requested their leader, *Indra*, to take up the task. *Indra* hastened towards it but the spirit disappeared.

But in the same region of the heavens Indra came across a most beautiful lady, *Uma*, daughter of the Himalayas, and asked of her what that spirit was? She replied that, "this was *Brahman*, to be sure, and in the victory of *Brahman*, indeed, do you glory thus." Then only *Indra* and other gods knew that the enigmatic spirit was *Brahman* (K.U. 3-4). In retelling this story the much later text *Markandya Purana* puts the following words in the mouth of the goddess, "Neither *Brahma*, nor *Visnu* nor lord *Siva* are entitled to pride before me in any way. Why speak of other gods? The *Supreme Brahman*, the sun on high, the syllable *OM* encompassing the pairs of opposites - all this am I. There is no one higher than I. Formless yet possessing form, consisting of all the reals, with indefinable attributes, eternal consisting of both causes and effects, sometimes taking the form of a lovely woman, sometimes of man, sometimes of both, I am the goddess who assumes all forms... Ignorant of my true nature, all you gods glory in your omnipotence to no avail. It is by my power alone that you have defeated all the sons of *Diti*... So recognise who I am, O gods and renounce your pride. Worship me, the eternal *Prakriti* with love".

The object of the story is twofold: First, the Mother Goddess *Uma*, womanhood incarnate, became the teacher of the Aryan male gods and initiated them into the most profound and elementary secret of the universe, the nature of *Brahman*, which in fact was her own essence. Secondly, the term *Brahman*, as it is used in the Rg Veda, signifies merely the power inherent in the words and meters of the sacred hymns. In reference to the metaphysically conceived ground of all being, the use of the term *Brahman* does not appear till the *Brahmana* texts and that too very rarely. It flowers only in the *Aranayaks* and the *Upnisads*.

The concept of *Brahman* appears to be of Austric inspiration. The Polynesian Austrics have the idea of *Mana*, or the divine essence, which permeates all objects and beings and even the whole universe. This *Mana* seems to provide the underpinning to the conception of Brahman being both transcendent and immanent and pervading the entire universe. Here is what Dr S.K.Chaterji has to say on this subject:" In India, possibly based on conceptions

which worked already in the minds of pre-Aryan peoples, the great concept of Brahma or the Supreme spirit, a kind of *Mana* which is both transcendent and immanent in our mundane existence was arrived at:."[6] The Austrics of India contributed this idea to the composite Dravido-Austric culture of Harappa and it became the attribute and fundamental essence of the Great Mother. She is described in the *Markandya Purana* (89.33.35) in the following words:" In such a way does the divine goddess, although eternal, take birth again and again to protect creation. This world is deluded by Her, it is She who gives knowledge when prayed to and prosperity when pleased. By *Mahakali* is this entire *Egg of Brahman* pervaded. At the awful time of dissolution She takes on the form of *Mahamari,* the Great Destructress of the world.. She is also its unborn source, eternal, She sustains creatures in time."

The myth of *Durga Mahiasura Mardini,* as related in the *Devi Mahtmya* portion of the *Markandya Puran,* supplies another illustration of the supremacy of the goddess over the Aryan gods. As the myth goes, when all the gods were unable to control the destruction wrought by the demon *Mahisa* they approached *Visnu* and *Siva* for help and at their suggestion all the gods, together with *Visnu* and *Siva,* pooled their energies to create an 18 armed goddess, *Durga,* upon whom all the gods bestowed their emblems, ornaments and weapons and the goddess then annihilated the buffalo demon. In other words the particularised but limited powers of all the male divinities became integrated in a single overwhelming totality who was superior to them all, the Divine Mother who was identical with the primal cosmic life force.

The Great Mother or *Mahadevi* along with *Visnu* and *Siva* became the corner stone of Hinduism. But the interesting thing about these two male gods is that they became, and continue to be so, the objects of worship of the religious elites and not of the masses. The deities that have real importance in the lives of Hindu masses are the goddesses of earth, water and disease rather than the gods of higher traditions. Therefore when a peasant sends his supplications they are addressed to these *gramdevtas* of Indian countryside and towns and not to Siva or Visnu.. These village goddesses whose names are legions and whose attributes vary with each region of the country are nothing else but the representations of the Great Mother of Harappan antiquity.

In some parts of Northern India there is a festival celebrated in the month of October devoted entirely to the worship of this Great Mother who provides sustenance to the mankind from her womb. She is called *Hoi* (She happened?). I remember that on this festive day my mother, after white washing a portion of the kitchen wall, used to draw a crude image of the goddess with help of a string dipped in red oxide of iron. The interesting thing about this image was that in her belly or womb were drawn pictures, albeit crude, of various kinds of fruits, vegetables and stalks of corn etc. And in front of this image were placed earthen pots, one for each of us children, full of the real goodies mother had drawn pictures of in the womb of the image.

A pot is again a symbol of the womb of the goddess. After a brief *puja* we used to dip our hands in the pot to extract the eatables to our great delight. We were, without knowing it of course, drawing our sustenance from the womb of the Great Mother of the Harappa seal. The same Mother Goddess was invoked for health and prosperity. On such occasions as when we were taken to the Mayo hospital in Lahore for vaccination against small pox, our mother never missed to make a detour to the nearby temple of *Seetla Devi* - the goddess of small pox - to buy double insurance against the dread disease. The object of this personal digression is to show that the goddess of the pre-Aryan vintage stands triumphant on every side and that she is the greatest power in modern Hinduism. Otherwise how could one explain the gathering of multitudes at the temples of *Kali,. Vaishnu Devi, Naina Devi* and a myriad of other female divinities representing various aspect of the Great Mother.

Her worshippers therefore continue to stick to the beliefs and ideas of those long forgotten people who built the Harappa civilisation thousands of years ago. The reinstatement of the Goddess in the popular cults marks the resurgence of the non-Aryan, pre-Aryan traditions of the Dravido-Austrics of Harappa civilisation. The first temple to honour this Goddess in modern Hinduism was raised in 423 C.E. in Rajasthan which was once a part of the Harappa domain.

The triumphant return of the Great Mother was described in spectacular myths and legends not only in the *Puranas* but in secular literature as well. Bana, a poet of 7th century sang her

greatness in his composition *Chandisataka* and a 9th century Kasmirian poet Anandvardhana did the same in his celebrated *Devisatka*. This latter composition portrays the Goddess as the ultimate rationale and the motivation of Hinduism. The return of the Goddess also gave birth to a new iconography in Indian art. Henceforth the feminine was glorified not only in Hindu but in Budhist art as well. The examples of this art can be found in all corners of India.

With the return of the Goddess, Tantarism which worships *Sakti*, the active power of godhead, made its way back in the religious consciousness of the people, and 6th century onwards it becomes immensely popular in every strata of population be they philosophers, theologians, ascetics or just common devotees of *Siva, Sakti or Visnu* in his various incarnation, *Krishna* in particular. Starting from this period the Tantric texts appear to come from official Brhmanin sources which shows the increasing hold of Tantrism on the traditional religion of the Brahmanas. It is through the channel of Tantrism that the pre-Aryan Harappan spirituality made its way into Hinduism. Indian philosophy, mysticism, ritual, ethics, iconography and literature became thoroughly imbued with Tantarism. Its influence can be seen in Buddhism, Kasmirian *Saivism* and *Visnuite* literature like *Bhagvata Purana*.

It has been estimated that two thirds of Hindu religion practised to-day and one third of Hindu medicine is Tantric[7] It was the materialistic outlook and emphasis on the primacy of direct sense perception in Tantrism that favoured the growth of science and scientific experimentation in Tantric circles. For example the medical literature of the period stressed that the dissection of the corpse was a must for the knowledge anatomy. Compare this to the attitude of the Brahmin lawgiver Manu according to whose precepts a mere touch of a dead body was polluting to a twice born. The universities of Nalanda, Udanatpura and Vikramsila are said to have been famous for the study of Tantrism with particular importance being attached to alchemy. Tantrism also contributed to other positive sciences such as physiology, chemistry and metallurgy and the Tantrikas are said to have invented a variety of scientific instruments. The whole edifice of Hinduism in fact bears a Tantric character.

A few centuries after the period under review great temples of Khajuraho and Konark were destined to go up to the glory of this irresistible Tantaric advance that also implied a new victory for the pre-Aryan Harappan religious sensibilities.

Hinduism, its traditions and ideology owe a great debit to the Harappans. In fact there are many more resemblences between the historic Hinduism and Harappan religion then there are between the former and the cattle keeping cultures of Central Asia from where the intruding Aryans came. The deities and dogmas of Hinduism today are not those of the intruders. The introspection of the *Upnisads, Puja, Bhakti* and worship of idols in ornate temples are quite contrary to the teachings of Vedas. Despite the wealth of rationalisation and interpretations developed by later Brahmanical writers the fact remains that much that is typical in Hinduism derives not from the Aryans but from the Harappans. As Prof. Bahadur Mal has put it in typical Punjabi idiom, the share of Aryans in classical Hinduism is equal to four annas (twenty five nya paisa) in a rupee.[8] This portion consists mainly of Hindu domestic *sanskaras* of birth, initiations, marriage and death and a four *varna* society .

The Brahmains insisted and succeeded in keeping these institutions under their control so that even under changed circumstances they could keep themselves in positions of power and control. As in Europe, the Aryans gave a language but borrowed a culture. The Harappa civilisation had sprung from the Indian soil and prehistory and therefore it reflected the mood and fulfilled the aspiration of a stable conservative peasant society which has always been the backbone of India. And for this reason it did not die but survived the disappearance of the Harappans and just lay in wait till the time was ripe for it to emerge once again with new vigour and elan. It eventually absorbed the Aryans and other foreign hordes, who invaded India from time to time, and made them Hindus till the appearance of the zealots of Allah on the Indian horizon.

References

1. Charles Elliot - Buddhism & Hinduism - Vol.2. p.191.
2. R.C.Majumdar - Religion & Philosophy - The Age of Imperial Unity - B.V.Bhavan Bombay 1960- p.363.

3. D.D.Kosambi - Myth & Reality - Bombay 1992 p.
4. H. Zimmer - Myths & Symbols in Indian Art & Civilization - Princeton University Press 1992 - p.90.-91
5. Joseph Campbell - Transformation of Myth Through Time - Harper & Row New York, 1990 -p.51.
6. S.K.Chatterji - Introduction to the Cultural Heritage of India Vol.1. p.xliv. The introduction has been co-written by Dr.S.K.Chatterji, A.D.Pusalker & Nalinkasha Dutt. But this passage was definitely written by Dr.Chatterji as he almost repeats it in his Contributions from Different Language-CultureGroups in the same volume.
7. A.S.Geden - E.R.E Vol.12 p.192.
8. Bahadur Mal - A story of Indian Culture - Hoshiarpur Punjab 1956 - p.10.

An Assessment of Harappa Civilisation : It's Implication for Hinduism 11

Every student of Harappa civilisation is struck by the fact that in comparison with the two other riverine civilisation of the ancient world- Sumer and Egypt- the achievements of the Harappan civilisation in art, architecture and technology were far less dramatic and disappointingly few. The only exception was in the domain of city planning and sanitation which was no doubt engendered by the strong sense of pollution and ritual purity which has remained a part and parcel of Hinduism even to this day.

No matter how superior the Harappan housing, sanitary and road engineering were it cannot be denied that the Harappa civilisation was simply unglamorous, conservative, boring, depressing and highly utilitarian. The Harappan city was a model of drabness; its brick buildings huddled in blocks after blocks wore the same look. Their monotony was not broken by a door, a window or a balcony. Their dull brickwork was devoid of any exterior or interior decorations or ornamentation. Some of the houses found were indeed large, and presumably comfortable but lacked grace. There was no monumental architecture and sculpture and relatively little art. No royal treasures or luxury goods have been recovered from the Harappa ruins. There is nothing remarkable about pottery and jewellery that has been found there.

When I visited the site of Mohenjodaro, just before the partition of the subcontinent, I was strongly reminded of the little medieval town in the Eastern Punjab where my maternal grandparents lived. It was quite an old dreary place where windowless houses, made of small sized burnt bricks, lined both sides of its main streets that led off to a warren of narrow lanes and byways. It was a joyless, suffocating, claustrophobic and unattractive place. I always hated to visit that place. "There is a terrible efficiency about Harappa civilisation which recalls all the worst of Rome, but with this elaborately contrived system goes an isolation and a stagnation

hard to parallel in any known civilisation," writes Piggott [1]. In fact the stagnation is so pervasive that from the very beginning to the lingering demise of this civilisation one can find no change at all in the content of its material culture.

The post-Harappan Brahmi script underwent several changes from its beginning to the Gupta age and beyond but the Harappan script remained totally unchanged throughout the life span of this civilisation. This amply illustrates the unchanging mind set of the Harappans. Piggott goes on to say in this civilisation," we encounter in monumental form the first instance in the story of India of the innate conservatism of thought that is repeated through the centuries."[2] In short Harappa Civilisation was not very remarkable in that its techniques being initially imported from Elam or Sumer were never improved, its buildings utilitarian and its arts and artefacts few and unattractive. The entire civilisation bore a stamp of strong priestly authority.

The priestly class by nature is orthodox. It abhors innovation as it is likely to challenge their own supremacy and position of advantage. It tends to impose on the intellectual process of society a measure of conservatism amounting sometime to almost complete paralysis. In medieval Europe, the Church, in order that the lay masses may not challenge the priestly interpretation of the holy scriptures, denied education to the general public. The study of mathematics and philosophy were crimes which were punishable with death. So much so that by the edict of the Council of Toulouse (1129 C.E) reading and possession of the Bible in vernacular was declared to be a sin. It would appear that the Harappan society was a similar victim of priestly impositions.

The religion of Harappa, as I have been able to gather. was a mixed bag of various emerging spiritualities. At a higher level people practised a kind of proto-Jainism and *yoga* and the worship of a Mother Goddess was definitely a domestic rite with them. The living philosophy of the time was a kind of primitive *Sankhya*. At a lower level the people worshipped the magical powers of fertility, trees, snakes, spirits, both benign and malevolent, and fetishes. The religion that emerged round about the middle of the first millennium of the Common Era was no different. It was not a well defined historically evolved religion with a founder, a sacred scripture, a church and above all a code of universally binding

doctrines as in the case of Judaism. Christianity and Islam. There was no unity of any kind in it and it did not seem to confirm to any logic.

It was rather a mosaic of various kinds of cults, sects, deities and ideas which ranged across every nuance of polytheistic, dualistic, monotheistic modes of thought and faith all the way to an impersonal non-anthropomorphic Absolute that transcended human imagination. All shades of animism, animatism, magic, fetishism had gone into the making of it and continue to be part of it even to-day. It was, and continues to be, like a proliferating and expanding bunyan tree whose branches take root in the ground and themselves become trees and eventually form a dense forest in which the parent stock is completely submerged and lost to sight.

It had no fixed doctrine in that it had not developed any concept relating to a belief in one God or many gods. The concept of the godhead ranged from the abstract Absolute of the *Upnisadas* to a shapeless mass of stone smeared with *sindur* representing a gramdevta found under the sacred *pipal* tree or near a pond of stagnant water in a remote village. The religion, to say the least, was a living museum of all kinds of current and archaic beliefs and practices flung together without much thought. It was like a river in flood with all kinds of flotsam and jetsam bobbing on its surface.

This patch-work quilt of a religion, which for the lack of a suitable term is called Hinduism, was the handiwork of the priestly class of the Brahmins who had for long been the intellectual leaders of the masses. Leaders they might have been but they had no responsibility for spiritual and moral welfare of the people. Had this been so they might have created a more meaningful and profound doctrine from the welter of ideas floating around them. As Prof. Thapar has said, "instead of a drive towards rationalism Hinduism created irrational chances for magicians, mystegogues and ritually oriented strata."[3] This happened because the main concern of the Brahmins was not religion or ethics but only their sacerdotal power. Their whole endeavour was directed towards keeping themselves entrenched in positions of power and derive pecuniary advantages from the performance of religious rites for their clients. Their fortunes had declined once when Buddhism

and Jainism had ruled the roost. They did not want to lose out to the new cults of *Vaisnavism, Saivism* and others although these cults owed no allegiance to the Vedas.

For instance the *Bhagvat Gita*, the most important scripture of the *Vaisnavas*, spoke in derogatory terms of the Vedic religion of sacrifices. Similarly *Saivites* declared that the path of Vedas did not lead to final liberation from the vortex of *sansara*. It did not matter to the Brahmins as long as these cults paid due respect to priestly class, observed caste rules and paid lip service to the Vedas which apparently all these new cults did. The Brahmins in turn readily accepted and gave their approval to all sorts of beliefs and practices. They were, as Prof. Hardy has observed, a clearing house: they received religious material and returned it in a form that bears their stamp[4]. The *Puranas* were the medium through which the Brahmins achieved their ends of assimilating and accommodating a multitudes of rational and irrational cults and practices within the fold of the newly emerging Hinduism. From the beginning of the Common era down to about 7th century Hinduism assumed a form which has remained more or less the unchanged till modern times.

We must give credit where credit is due: the assimilative and integrative powers of the Brahmins Hinduised all the foreign hordes such as the Greeks, Kushans, Parthians, Sakas.and the Huns who invaded India from the fall of the Mauryan empire onwards. The descendants of these foreign hordes were destined to be the sole champions of Hinduism in later centuries, as the proud sons of Rajasthan, against the Muslim invaders.

While Hinduising the four corners of India the Brahmins consolidated their position as custodians of the new dispensation and its rites, rituals and places of worship. They were also the makers of law, its interpreters and often its executioners. In short the Brahmins were able to get a hold on every aspect, whether secular or religious, of the life of every strata of Hindu society, ruling classes not excluded. In fact it was the failure of the political process in the country, which saw a quick succession of ephemeral kingdoms after the demise of the Guptas, which helped the Brahmins to consolidate their power.

Such awesome power could be used for either god or evil: the

Brahmins chose it for evil. They framed elaborate taboos and inhibition concerning diet, dress, social communication between castes and communities. They even prescribed rules concerning sex: with whom , on what occasion and at what hour of the day it could be indulged in. And many other rules governing every activity of a Hindu were prescribed by them. Kosambi has given an example of two texts - *Krityakalpataru* of Bhata Laxmidhara and *Caturvargachintamani* of Hemadri which are crammed with such rules. These two tomes if printed in their entirety, he says, would fill 12 fat volumes each [5].

The injunctions prescribed in the Manusmriti are no less ludicrous. For instance it prescribes that one should not step over a rope to which a calf is tied, one should not run when it rains nor one should see his image in the water (1V.38). The text also contains rules for eating, urinating, defecating in the prescribed manner. These rules were rigorously imposed by the Brahmins and any Hindu who did not observe these taboos was excommunicated and subjected to most cruel social coercion. No body would visit him. He could not sit or dine with members of his own community. The community barber would not give him a shave or cut his hair and the washer man would not wash his dirty linen. An above all, no religious ceremony concerning birth, marriage and death etc would be conducted for him by the Brahmins. He was, in short, reduced to a non-person.

By converting the fluid class society of Vedic times into a rigid caste system the Brahmins created an apartheid the like of which was not seen even in the erstwhile modern South African state. As a result of this caste system majority of the Hindus, who formed the lower classes, were denied access to education and opportunities to better themselves. The *Sudra*, who formed the lowest rung of the Hindu caste society was not allowed to recite or hear Vedas. If he was caught doing so, it was recommended that molten lead be poured in his ears and his tongue be cut off (*Gautama Dharam Sastra*-XX.4.5). The *Sudra* was just a chattel who could be slain at will of his master. He could not hold property and could not better his status even if an opportunity for doing so came his way because a *Sudra* who made money was distressing to a Brahmin (Manu. X.129). Since he was a non-person his testimony could not be accepted in a court of law.

Woman of the twice born fared no better under this rigorous caste laws as they were classed with people of low origin. The *Maitrayani Samhita* described woman as untruth (1.X.6.8;!!.6.3). *Taittirya Samhita* said that a good woman was worse than a bad man (V!.5.8.2). The *Katha Samhita* sarcastically alluded to a woman's ability to obtain things from her husband by cajoling him at night (XXX,1). As in the case of the *Sudra* women were not allowed to recite or listen to the Vedas. They were not entitled to any formal education. They were also denied any right to hold property. The woman was expected to remain in bondage to man in perpetuity. When unmarried she was subject to the will of her father, and on marriage to that of her husband, and in the event of his death, to that of her son. In contrast to the philandering ways of men, too much stress was laid on the chastity of woman and therefore the Brahmin lawmakers unanimously recommended early marriage of women even before puberty.

A Vaisya, though belonging to the upper three classes, had a status barely a step above that of a Sudra. *Aitareya Brahamana* (V!!!.29) describes him as a tributary to the other two higher castes, to be lived upon by them and to be exploited and oppressed by them at will. He is pictured in the Brahmanical literature as wretched and down trodden peasant or a merchant who is no interest to his superiors except as a source of profit. He had few rights and had a distinctly humble status in the Brahmanical social order.

Perhaps the greatest damage done by the Brahmins was to the development of science. Science is a systematic study of nature and the physical world through observation and experimentation. The triumph of *Vedanta* of Sankara (9th century) reduced the physical world to a mere illusion and the every day experiences in it, such as eating, drinking, copulation, happiness, sorrow etc, as having no reality of their own. Such an attitude paralysed all curiosity and intelligent examination of the natural world. At the same time the Brahmin law giver were insistent that every strand of thought should conform to the ancient scriptures. Thus every branch of thought was given a strong religious coloration. If the Indians, elites and plebeians alike, had travelled abroad and mixed with other people it would have broadened their out look. But the haughty Brahmins had put a ban on overseas travel. and had prescribed strict penalties for those who infringed this prohibition.

In such a closed and suffocating atmosphere there was no chance for science to develop and it became a mixed bag of superstition and speculation.

That great Muslim writer, Alberuni, who visited India in the 11th century had this to say of the Indian science," Even the scientific theorems of the Hindus are in a state of utter confusion, devoid of any logical order, and in the last instance always mixed up with the silly notions of the crowd.......... I can compare their mathematical and astronomical literature to a mixture of pearl shells and sour dates or pearls and dung...Both kinds of things are equal in their eyes since they cannot raise themselves to methods of a strictly scientific deduction."[6] Perhaps referring to scholars of Gupta age Alberuni says that the Hindus of old were not so narrow minded and self centred. He particularly refers to the praise of Greek astronomy by Vrahamihara[7]

It appears that Medicine was the most developed science in ancient India and was based on research and experimentation. Charka and Susruta were two great names in Indian medicine. The dissection of human body was considered to be an essential and important part of the medical education. Susruta is said to be the first plastic surgeon. Hindu texts on medicine and pharmacology were translated into Arabic and through the Arabs reached the western world. But the science of medicine and its profession took a nose dive when the Brahmins declared that the very touch of a dead body or bodily fluids such as blood, bile and urine etc was enough to pollute and contaminate a twice born, meaning mainly the Brahmins and the Kastriyas.

Vagbhata a surgeon of the 8th century was perhaps the last one to use a lancet and after him the study of anatomy and practice of surgery fell into disrepute. Manusmrity prohibited a householder from inviting a physician to a religious feast as his presence was polluting The physician was ranked in the category of meat sellers, herders of cattle, actors, singers, keepers of gambling houses and the like(Manu. 111.152-165.) Thus the medical profession was relegated to the lower castes. Before the advent of modern medicine in India it were the barbers who performed surgery and the wrestlers who fixed broken and dislocated bones. The medical profession was held in such disrepute that, it is said, the authorities were hard put to find students from amongst the

high caste Hindus for the first western style college of medicine that was established by the British Government of India in Calcutta .

Hot weather makes people disinclined towards physical hard work. It did not take long for the law givers to condemn any kind of manual labour as unworthy of the twice born. The two high castes of Brahmins and Ksatriyas treated honest manual labour with contempt and therefore all the professions involving manual labour, such as metal workers, weavers, masons, architects, carpenters, potters, barbers and the like were categorised by *Yajnanvalkya Smrti* at par with the professions of prostitutes, pimps, gamblers, thieves and drunkards. In any pre-industrial society these were the very professions that produced the national wealth but the Hindu society, created by the Brahmin mind, relegated these vocations to the lowest rungs of the social order.

Thus the *Sudras* produced the wealth and the higher castes appropriated it. The *Sudras* was denied education and they received no input of ideas from the intellectual classes (perhaps they had none to give) and as such they were left to their native wit and hard work to carry on the old traditions of their crafts. The famous iron pillar of Delhi, which has stood there for almost two thousand years without rusting, was produced by these very low caste workers. They took the secret of making it with them and left no records simply because they were illiterate and knew nothing of writing and keeping records. To sum up we quote what Kosambi had to say on this subject:" The absence of logic, contempt for mundane reality, the inability to work at manual and menial tasks, emphasis upon learning basic formulas by rote with secret meaning to be expounded by a high *guru*, and respect for tradition (no matter how silly) backed by fictitious ancient authority had a devastating effect on Indian science,"[8]

The post Gupta age was an age of commentaries on ancient works and then of commentaries on these commentaries ad-infinitum. No new works on science, mathematics and medicine etc were produced. Of philosophy about which the Hindus claim a special aptitude, I am reminded of a comment made by Somerset Maugham after meeting a Hindu holy man: " He said things I had heard from others twenty times before. That is the worst of Indian thinkers, they say the same things in the same words, and though

you feel that it should make them restive, for if they possess the truth, as they are convinced they do, and if the truth is one and indivisible, it is natural enough that they should repeat it like parrots, there is no denying the fact that it is irksome to listen interminably to the same statements. You wish at least they could think of other metaphors, similes, illustrations than those of the *Upnisadas*. Your heart sinks when you hear again the one about the snake and the rope"[9]

Thus on the eve of Muslim invasions, the Brahmins priests had turned the medieval Hindu society into a replica of the one created by their Harappan forefathers on the banks of the Indus and its tributaries. The things had come to a full circle and it was closed tightly. It remained so till it was breached once again by the rejuvenating winds from the West in the 19th century.

References

1. Stuart Piggott - Prehistoric India - Penguin Books, England, 1950 - p.138.
2. ibid. p.139
3. Romila Thapar - Interpreting Early India - Oxford University Press New Delhi 1979 - p.51.
4. F.Hardy - Hinduism - World Religions - Boston 1997 p.573.
5. D.D. Kosambi - Ancient India - Meridian Books 1969 - p.173
6. Alberuni - Indica - S.Chand & co New Delhi .1964 - p.25.
7. ibid. p.23.
8. D.D.Kosambi- opp.cit. p. 174-75.
9. Somerset Maugham - A writer's Note Book - London 1949 - p.266.